

THE GREATEST MAN OF ALL TIME

A Mercy To The World

OVER A BILLION PEOPLE LOVE HIS TRUE STORY.

Adam Rahman

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On



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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
1. Trustworthy Merchant.....	3
2. Bliss.....	8
3. Sanctuary Rebuilt.....	11
4. Return of Gabriel	14
5. The First Responders.....	18
6. The Quiz.....	24
7. Last Third of the Night.....	29
8. Poet of the City	31
9. Negotiations	34
10. Test of Wills.....	37
11. Vying for the King's Favor	40
12. House of al-Arqam.....	50
13. Boycott.....	57
14. Heartfelt Sorrow.....	60
15. Night Journey and the Incredible Ascent.....	67
16. Planting a Seed.....	80
17. Assassination Conspiracy.....	86
18. Journey to Madinah.....	91
19. Forces from Beyond.....	100
20. Laying Siege	121
21. Intoxicants.....	125
22. Disobedient Warriors	127
23. Triple Treachery.....	142

24.	Plot Exposed.....	145
25.	Transformation	150
26.	Vindicated.....	155
27.	Intense Sandstorm	162
28.	Justice	176
29.	Great Victory	184
30.	Treasure	200
31.	Roman Emperor Heraclius	207
32.	Invitations to Powerful Rulers.....	213
33.	Flashback.....	219
34.	Homecoming	225
35.	Face-Off with The Romans	232
36.	Treaty Broken.....	240
37.	Remarkable Coup	247
38.	Rally	262
39.	Rematch with The Romans	276
40.	Change of Allegiance	292
41.	Christians of Najran.....	298
42.	Mission Complete.....	301
43.	Extraordinary Choice.....	309
44.	Epilogue: The Messiah	319
	Learn More	325
	Credits	326
	References	328

Introduction

Life is a chain of trials. From infancy, to childhood, to adolescence, to adulthood and old age, struggles are everywhere throughout life. But it seems that struggle is growing in number and increasing in magnitude, a trend never seen before in history. We live in a world of wealth inequality, poverty, wide scale hunger, discrimination, exploitation, water shortages, pollution, drugs and addiction, global warming, obesity, wars, and so many other problems.

What are we going to do? When will *we change* our situation?

To solve the problems of today, we must focus on tomorrow. In order to change the world, change must first start from within ourselves. Change is a seed, nurtured through inspiration – inspiration in the examples of those who have succeeded before us. In the model businessman, the phenomenal philanthropists, the just military commanders, the influential political leaders, the beloved spouses, the nurturing parents, and the ultimate peacemakers.

But are there actually figures from whom we can gain broad and deep inspiration to effectively bring about change? How many people have influenced their community, their country, their continent, and our world by simultaneously holding all of the roles mentioned?

Is it even possible to find all of these positions held by a single person?
What if I told you there was?

What if you didn't have to look at thousands or hundreds or even ten figures to find all these traits? What if you could find all these qualities, what if you could find all this inspiration by looking at the life of just a single person? What if you could see, hear, understand, and carry out change from learning about a man who mastered all these roles plus more? What if I told you about The Greatest Man of All Time?

The Greatest Man of All Time inspires over a billion people in the world today. In a time when ignorance, corruption, and violence were rampant in society, he guided people to knowledge, justice, and peace. In a time when his nation was divided, he brought an unparalleled level of unity within his state and across other nations. Although he acquired wealth and fortunes that go beyond the dreams of kings, he gave it all away in charity to the poor, hungry, and those in need...Does he inspire you?

1. Trustworthy Merchant

Heads turned as the beasts, laden with riches, made their way through the market and to Khadija's retail base. Her latest caravan from Syria left a trail of patterned sand in its wake as the camels entered the City. Khadija was a daughter of a highly respected tribal chieftain in the City, and was considered one of the most beautiful women of her time. Not only was she honored for her father's position, but also for her noble lineage.

Khadija had two sons with her first husband before she was widowed at a young age. She later remarried, but her second husband also died. At the passing of her father, she inherited his business as well, which flourished under her gifted hand. Widowed twice and left with a small fortune, Khadija was sought after by all the suitors in the City.

But Khadija was not immediately interested in marriage again.

In possession of so much wealth, she was vulnerable to those who wanted to take it from her underhandedly. Khadija preferred to

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In possession of so much wealth, she was vulnerable to those who wanted to take it from her underhandedly. Khadija preferred to

hire agents or merchants to take her caravans to faraway lands and trade her goods, in favor of remaining in the City and raising her sons. Many of the agents she hired turned out to be frauds, cheating her of her money and goods. Khadija found herself in a difficult situation. Sitting in the City with her mind on her goods flitting through distant markets in the hands of wayward men, she felt the shortage of a trustworthy, capable merchant heavy on her shoulders.

In the meantime, life went on as usual in the City. Khadija had a sister who wished to hire some people to tend her sheep. In the course of searching for a shepherd, she learned of a man whose name meant "the one who is praised," or the Praiseworthy.

The Praiseworthy tended to the people's flocks in a valley near the City in return for only modest compensation. He was neither tall nor short. Those who passed by his medium frame undoubtedly felt his presence, for he stood upright, with broad shoulders, thick, curly, black hair, and a smile always on his handsome face. When someone spoke to him, he turned his entire body to them, completely engaged in the conversation. He always walked with purpose and poise, lifting his feet with vigor as if the flat land beneath him were taking him downhill. While alone, tending to the sheep, he often contemplated the world and its creation. Being in tune with the animals and their natural disposition taught him a patience, tenderness, mercy, humility, and simplicity that few possess.¹

Khadija's sister sought out the Praiseworthy and negotiated with his shepherd partner to tend to her sheep in the field. The Praiseworthy and his partner agreed, and the two herded the sheep a number of times, until it came time for Khadija's sister to pay them.

His shepherd partner said, "Let's go ask for our wages from Khadija's sister."

"Would you collect it on my behalf?" the Praiseworthy asked, "I am shy to approach her."

In that society, displaying modesty was a virtue. Thus, the partner went alone to Khadija's sister. He entered the door to find two women inside- Khadija and her sister. Though they undoubtedly resembled each other, one was more beautiful than the other. Khadija's

sister rose and prepared the money, ready to pay the two shepherds; she was surprised to find only one shepherd had come to claim his wages.

"Where is your friend?" Khadija's sister asked, "I hired two men to tend to my sheep. Why has the other man not come?"

The man responded, "He was too shy to come. He has trusted me to collect his wages, and I will give it to him."

At this, Khadija's sister exclaimed, "I have not seen any man who is more shy, noble, honorable, and chaste in his interactions than your friend!"

Khadija listened to the conversation. It was the first time she had heard of the Praiseworthy and his noble character. Was there really such a man? Khadija could not help but become more curious about him. Khadija's sister paid the shepherd, and he walked off to give a share to his friend.

In his early years, the Praiseworthy was known to be honest, trustworthy, very helpful, and wise beyond his age. He neither drank alcohol nor engaged in promiscuity. After asking about him, Khadija sought him out for her business as a merchant. The Praiseworthy was not an experienced business trader, but because of his close relationship with his uncle, Abu Talib – who was a merchant – he had a good understanding of bartering and conducting business. The Praiseworthy started out trading in markets and bazaars on her behalf. He found his employer to be very kind, and as he gained additional business experience, Khadija paid him more commission than her other agents since he consistently achieved more profits while demonstrating unparalleled integrity.²

A time came when drought in and around the City made conditions tough. To offset the slowdown in local commerce, Khadija inquired whether the Praiseworthy would travel to Syria, acting as her agent to trade on her behalf. She offered to share half of the profits with him, which was very generous. Such a business offer amazed the Praiseworthy, who, although a nobleman with exceptional honesty,

was not wealthy enough to even have his own living space! He still lived with his uncle, Abu Talib, and contributed to the household expenses as much as possible.

He consulted Abu Talib on whether to accept such an endeavor. His uncle encouraged the Praiseworthy to pursue the opportunity.

The Praiseworthy was accompanied on the trip by one of Khadija's servants, Maysarah, who had been directed by her to keep an eye on this man.

While traveling, Maysarah witnessed a number of things about the Praiseworthy which he had never seen before with any other individual.

Once at the market, while doing business, the Praiseworthy was asked to swear upon idols – the deities of the land – which was a custom while doing business.

Maysarah heard the Praiseworthy stand firm on principle and say, "I do not swear by these gods."

Maysarah contrasted other traders with the Praiseworthy. While others did not hesitate to employ questionable business practices, he never saw the Praiseworthy cheat a customer. His caravan's earnings, nevertheless, continued to grow as they moved through the markets of Syria.

The journey back was in very hot weather, and Maysarah, who admired the Praiseworthy greatly at this point, checked to see how the trustworthy merchant was coping with the heat. To his surprise, he saw the Praiseworthy shaded by a cloud. Even when the caravan changed direction, the cloud seemed to persistently cover the Praiseworthy from the intense sun rays. It seemed to defy the normal laws of nature!^{3,4}

When the caravan returned to the City, Maysarah rushed to inform Khadija of all that had transpired on the trip. His incredible admiration of the Praiseworthy amazed Khadija. When the Praiseworthy came to Khadija to deliver her goods, she was pleasantly surprised to discover he had made more than double the expected

profit, larger than any other merchant had made on her behalf. He handed over the Syrian goods and money earned on the business trip. Khadija paid him the agreed upon commission.

Khadija had never met such a man so honest and honorable. His mannerisms and deference with her planted a seed of affection for the Praiseworthy in her heart.

2. Bliss

After being widowed twice, Khadija felt that most marriage suitors wanted her money more than anything, and turned them down. On the other hand, wealth was not the primary aim for the Praiseworthy. His fine character was quite attractive to her. Khadija sought the advice of a few close relatives, who also thought highly of the Praiseworthy. She asked her friend to indirectly approach him.

Upon meeting the Praiseworthy, Khadija's friend asked, "What is keeping you from getting married?"

He responded, "I do not have enough to meet the expense of my marriage."

She prodded, "What if you are not called upon to meet such expenses?" What would you say to a woman of beauty, wealth, and position who is willing to marry you? Would you marry her?"

The Praiseworthy asked, "Who is that woman?"

"Khadija," she responded.

He inquired, "Who can arrange such a marriage for me?"

She reassured him, "Leave that to me."

He said, "I will do it, willingly."⁵

When Khadija received word from her friend that the Praiseworthy was interested in marrying her, she invited him to come see her.

He arrived to see Khadija.

As a close cousin described him, "The Praiseworthy...did not have a big body or a round face, but his blessed face was slightly round. His complexion was white with redness in it. His blessed eyes were extremely black. His eyelashes were long. The joints of the body were large, as was the portion between the two shoulders broad and fully fleshed. He had no excessive hair on his body...His hands and feet were fully fleshed...Any person who saw him suddenly would become awe-inspired. Anyone who describes his noble features can only say, 'I have never seen anyone like the Praiseworthy...'"⁶

When the Praiseworthy came to Khadija, she said to him, "I admire you because of your good position among your people, your honesty and good manners, and because you are a man of your word."

She proposed to the Praiseworthy, and he was overjoyed.

He went to his uncles to share the good news. Since the marriage process usually involved multiple stages of family alignment, they went to meet Khadija's uncle.

Speaking on behalf of the Praiseworthy, Abu Talib stated, "We are the noble descendants of Abraham and Ishmael. Of the blessings we have is that we are the caretakers of the Sanctuary, and The Majestic has blessed us to be the people of The City. This nephew of mine...is without peers in his manners, nobility, and lineage. If he is not wealthy, wealth is only something accidental. Money comes and goes, and many a wealthy man becomes poor. He will certainly have a great future. He is proposing marriage to your honorable daughter, Khadija, with twelve nuggets of silver."

Khadija's uncle did not hesitate in accepting the marriage proposal. The Praiseworthy and Khadija were soon married. While he was 25 years old at the time of marriage, she was older than him.

She gifted him a servant named Zayd, who the Praiseworthy later freed and adopted as a son. The couple would go on to have six children – four daughters and two sons.

3. Sanctuary Rebuilt

Visited by pilgrims near and far, the Sanctuary was built in the City by Abraham and Ishmael, two historic figures revered by both the Jews and Christians. It was originally a large rectangular structure surrounded by an open area for people to pay their respects. During the time of Abraham, The Majestic One had sent an Angel to deliver a white stone from the Heavens to Abraham, who set it in the Eastern corner of the Sanctuary. People came from near and far to touch the white stone. It is said that the stone eventually turned black as a result of dark sins committed by people.⁷

Millennia later, an inadvertent fire incident damaged the Sanctuary. Then a massive flood destroyed the roof and some of the walls of the structure. The Quraysh, the noblest tribe in the City, honored as keepers of the Sanctuary, decided that they were going to rebuild and restore its glory.

As they collected resources for the reconstruction, they set a condition that funds should have no linkage to interest accrued from debt or assets, nor should the funds be tied to prostitution or any

questionable source of income. The money would be pure. The Sanctuary was sacred, and therefore the rebuilding funds should also be wholesome.

Around this time in Rome, the Caesar sent supplies to a city in Yemen to rebuild a massive church which had been destroyed in a war. The Romans loaded a ship with the highest quality wood, fine marble, and the best craftsmen. When these materials were being transported by sea, a strong wind caused the ship to crash just off the coast of the Peninsula. With no hope of getting to their destination, the surviving crew of the ship set up a sale of the wood, marble, and other supplies. The Quraysh received the news and arrived at the nearby city to purchase all of the materials and hire the carpenters to rebuild the Sanctuary. The building blocks from Rome found their way to the City.

It was forbidden to do anything harmful to the Sanctuary. No one in the City wanted to be first to dismantle it. Near the Sanctuary was a well of fresh, holy water called Zam Zam that quenched the entire City and all the tribes who lived around it. Each time the Quraysh gathered up enough courage and strength to approach the building, a snake would emerge from the well of Zam Zam and hissed at them. This was enough to keep the project temporarily at bay.

Then one day, a big bird came and scooped up the snake. Although still terrified, the Quraysh felt as though they had somehow been granted permission to begin.

An influential man, Walid, approached the structure and whispered to the Sanctuary, "Don't be worried. This is for your benefit."

Walid then swung an axe and struck a wall of the Sanctuary to start the rebuilding. The Quraysh were still hesitant and decided to wait and see if he would drop dead overnight.

When Walid emerged from his bed alive and well the next morning, the tribe breathed a collective sigh of relief. They all went forward and participated in the reconstruction. Since the Quraysh had limited supplies, they changed the structure from a rectangle to a shape resembling a cube. They also doubled the height of the Sanctuary,

raised its door from ground level to the middle, and added a water spout to the top for drainage. It was a beautiful structure.

When the Quraysh were close to completion, they started arguing about who was going to place the heavenly stone into the Sanctuary. Skirmishes began erupting as clans reignited rivalries and vied to claim this honor. Construction stopped for five days as the dispute brewed. Several of the sub-tribes even agreed to a pact that they would fight to the death to place the stone in the structure. They were so serious that they dipped their hands in blood as a proxy to signing.

They finally agreed to a compromise that the first person to arrive at the construction site the next day would decide which clan would set the stone. Each sub-tribe felt that if someone from their group were to appear first, then he would side with them.

Close to dawn, a man emerged from a distance. Upon seeing the Praiseworthy, who many also knew as "the Trustworthy," all of the clans became happy because each felt that he would favor them above the others. People would trust him with their money while they were away on business, and they would also seek his advice even though he was one of the younger men of the Quraysh. Many in the City were starting to recognize that there was something very special about the Praiseworthy. At 35 years of age, his wisdom and eloquence were unmatched.

The clans put aside their differences and unanimously agreed, "Let the Trustworthy decide."

The Praiseworthy thought of a fair approach where he first laid out a cloth and placed the stone in the center of the cloth. Surrounded by the clan leaders, he advised each of them to take hold of a corner of the cloth and together lift the stone to its raised place on the outside edge of the Sanctuary. Honored to be included, they carried it close to the structure. As the clan leaders held it up to its rightful place, the Praiseworthy himself placed the stone in the wall of the Sanctuary.

Thus, it came to pass that the people of the City peacefully rebuilt the Sanctuary, and the Praiseworthy found a diplomatic solution to setting in place the heavenly stone, elegantly and intelligently resolving a dispute that could have led to war.⁸

4. Return of Gabriel

At the age of 40, the Praiseworthy began to dream every night about what would happen the following day, and then would see his dream come to fruition. He shared with Khadija what was happening to him.

She consoled, "This is a good sign from The Majestic."

They agreed that something surreal was happening.

Two miles outside of the City, the Praiseworthy traveled to a mountain. As he walked, he heard the rocks and stones greet him with peace. When he arrived, he climbed 890 feet in height until he reached the Cave of Hira, measuring 12 feet in length and just over 5 feet in width. The cave had been discovered by his grandfather, and it faced the Sanctuary. The Praiseworthy went into seclusion in the Cave of Hira where he contemplated and worshiped The Majestic alone for many days before returning to see his family. He took food and water

with him for the journey and when it was exhausted, he came back to Khadija.⁹

One Monday night while in Hira, the Praiseworthy sat alone, deep in thought. The inky black was heavy overhead, with the moon like a half plate in the sky. It was a night of Power.¹⁰

Suddenly, the Praiseworthy was in the presence of an extraordinary being, fashioned from pure light and tasked with ferrying messages between the realms of the worlds. The Archangel Gabriel appeared before the Praiseworthy.

Without prelude, the Angel asked the Praiseworthy to read.

The Praiseworthy was never taught to read, as only a minority in his clan gained literacy.

Stunned, he replied, "I do not know how to read."

Angel Gabriel embraced the Praiseworthy tightly until the Praiseworthy lost all energy and could not bear it any more. He then released the Praiseworthy and again asked him to read.

Taken by surprise, the Praiseworthy gasped again, "I do not know how to read."

To signal that he would now be inspired with a heavy, profound message, Angel Gabriel embraced him tightly a second time until the Praiseworthy was out of breath and could not bear it any longer. He then released the Praiseworthy and asked him to read again.

The Praiseworthy answered, "I do not know how to read."

Thereupon he squeezed the Praiseworthy a third time and then released him.¹¹

Angel Gabriel delivered The Majestic's message –

"Read! In the name of your Master and Cherisher, who created–

"Created man out of a mere leech-like clot of congealed blood

"Read! And your Master is Most Bountiful."¹²

Overwhelmed by the experience, the Praiseworthy then ran in the direction of his home with his heart beating rapidly. His first instinct was not to go to his friends or uncles, but rather to his wife.

With shivers racing down his spine, he gasped, "Cover me! Cover me!"

Khadija covered him and kept him warm until his fear abated enough for him to tell her everything that had happened.

The Praiseworthy confided, "I am scared for myself."

"Never!" Khadija replied, looking at her husband, wrapped in blankets at her side, "By The Majestic, He will never disgrace you. You uphold your ties of kinship, help the poor and the destitute, serve your guests generously, and assist the deserving calamity-afflicted ones."

Khadija accompanied the Praiseworthy to visit her cousin, Waraqa, who had traveled through the lands and was a Judeo-Christian scholar. He was known to write in Hebrew and was also well versed in the Gospel. Waraqa was an old man and had lost his eyesight.

Khadija said to Waraqa, "Listen to the story of your nephew, O my cousin!"

Referring to someone as "nephew" was a customary way to address someone younger, despite not being a relative.

Waraqa asked, "O my nephew! What have you seen?"

The Praiseworthy described his transformative experience.

Waraqa enthusiastically said, "Angel Gabriel is the same one who keeps the secrets for The Majestic and had been sent to Moses. How I wish I were a young man so that I could help you when your nation ridicules you, and your nation persecutes you, and your nation expels you."

Surprised, the Praiseworthy asked, "Will they drive me out?"

Waraqa replied in the affirmative and said, "Anyone who came with something similar to what you have brought was treated with hostility, and if I should remain alive until the day when you will be turned out, then I would support you strongly."

After a short time though, Waraqa passed away.

Several times during a period lasting over a month, the Praiseworthy roamed around the City, the valleys, and mountains, hoping to encounter Gabriel again. One day when he was walking down a mountain, the Praiseworthy suddenly heard a voice. He looked around and could not find the source. The Praiseworthy looked up and saw Angel Gabriel with his six hundred wings, sitting on a chair across the entire horizon between the heavens and the earth!¹³

Trembling and palpitating that the scene from Hira would reoccur, the Praiseworthy hurried home and implored Khadija, "Wrap me in blankets!"

While the Praiseworthy retreated to his house, The Majestic said,

"O you who covers himself with a garment

"Arise and warn

"And your Master glorify

"And your clothing purify

"And uncleanness avoid..."¹⁴

After this, revelations from The Majestic started coming to the Praiseworthy – now the Messenger – more regularly. As his resolve strengthened, the Messenger would be graced with the presence of Angel Gabriel, who would often take the form of a handsome man.

Once, while he was home, the Messenger said, "Oh Khadija, here is Gabriel, and he is sending The Majestic's peace upon you, and he is giving you the glad tidings of a house in Paradise where there will be no noise nor any struggling. You will have peace in that household."

Pleased, Khadija responded gracefully, "The Majestic is peace. And may peace be upon Gabriel, and may peace be upon The Messenger."¹⁵

5. The First Responders

For the three years after the first revelation, the Messenger called others to the faith privately and initially faced minimal confrontation from the Quraysh. While some affluent noblemen who knew the Messenger embraced the message, most of the people who believed him were from the poor.

The Majestic then commanded the Messenger that it was time to deliver the message to his close relatives. He requested his cousin, Ali, who lived in his household, to prepare a meal, including lamb and soup. The Messenger gathered 40 of his extended family members for dinner, including his uncle, Abu Lahab. Abu Lahab was known for following traditions blindly and for having a quick temper, but the Messenger extended an invitation anyway out of respect.

The delicious aroma of cooked meat wafted through the Messenger's home as his guests made their way inside. When everyone had arrived, the Messenger was the first to eat. He asked The

Majestic to bless the food. Although the lamb was in one plate and the soup was in one cup, all of his guests ate their fill.

After they had finished eating but before the Messenger could say something, Abu Lahab confrontationally said to him, "These are your uncles and cousins. You may speak to them, but you have to leave off apostasy. Do not turn away from the faith of your people, and do not expose them to the anger of the Peninsula's tribes. Your people cannot face up to opposition by the whole of the nation, and they cannot be expected to face them all in war...It is better for you that you revert to the religion of your fathers and grandfathers. Otherwise, we will have to put you in confinement until you are cured of the illness you are suffering so that we can spare you an attack by the Peninsula's tribes...I have never heard of anyone who caused his father's offspring anything worse than you have done!"

Abu Lahab was visibly shaking with anger. The Messenger's relatives were quietly contemplating their mixed emotions. Sensing the depressed mood, the Messenger took the high road and did not respond back as they sat and finished their meal.

After a few days had passed, the Messenger called his relatives for dinner again. Some of his aunts advised him not to invite Abu Lahab this time, especially after his most recent outburst. The Messenger thought about it but decided to take it in stride, extending a second dinner invitation to Abu Lahab as well. After all, he was his uncle and next door neighbor!

When his guests had finished eating, the Messenger addressed them, "Praise be to The Majestic! I praise Him, seek His support, believe in Him and rely on Him. I bear witness that there is no divine being other than The Majestic, the only One who has no partners.

"A forerunner does not tell lies to his own people. If I were to tell lies to all mankind, I would not tell one to you. By The Majestic who is the only One, I am The Majestic's Messenger to you in particular and to mankind in general. He has commanded me to call on you to believe in Him, saying, 'Warn your immediate kinsfolk.'

"I am calling on you to say two things which are easily pronounced, but weighty in The Majestic's scale: to bear witness that

there is no divine being other than The Majestic and that I am His Messenger.

“By The Majestic, you will die as you sleep, and will be resurrected as you wake up, and you will be held to account for what you do, and you will be rewarded well for your good actions and suffer retribution for your bad ones. It will be either Heaven forever or Hell forever.

“Children of my grandfather, by The Majestic, I know no one who has brought his people anything better than I am bringing you. I am offering you the happiness of this world and of the life to come. Who will accept my call and support me in furthering it?”

His uncle, Abu Talib, who had been the Messenger’s guardian in youth responded, “We dearly love to help you, and we certainly accept your advice, and believe what you have said. Assembled here are your grandfather’s offspring and I am but one of them, although I am the quickest with my favorable response. Go ahead with what you have been bidden, and I pledge to continue to give you my support and protection. I find it hard, however, to abandon the faith of my father.”

Abu Lahab became furious and retorted, “What shame! Stop him before he is stopped by someone else. If it comes to that and you abandon him, then you will be overwhelmed with shame; and if you try to protect him, you will all be killed.”

Many other relatives who were present agreed with Abu Talib’s more moderate approach and believed that they could not abandon the Messenger.

Seething, Abu Lahab stormed out of the room. This negative attitude was just the beginning of his rage; his anger resounded through the family, influencing his sons who had been engaged to the Messenger’s two daughters, Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthum. Abu Lahab ended both engagements as the Messenger went public with the message, and the two girls saw their fiancés walk away from them just like that.

One day, the Messenger walked to the top of mount Safa at the center of the City, close to the Sanctuary. He called out every clan by

name, asking them to gather around. People saw the Messenger’s silhouette up on the mount and heard his voice calling them to the center of the City. They closed shop, left their homes, and rushed all together to the Sanctuary.

The Messenger asked the throng of people before him, “If I were to tell you that armed horsemen are beyond this valley heading toward the City to attack you, would you believe me?”

They eagerly responded, “You are the Trustworthy, and we have never known you to tell lies.”

“Well then,” the Messenger proclaimed, “I am sent to you to warn you against grievous suffering.”

Many people were taken aback, and the crowd leaned in to hear what was about to come.

He continued, “The Majestic has ordered me to warn my immediate kinsfolk. It is not in my power to secure any benefit for you in this life, or any blessing in the life to come, unless you believe in the Oneness of The Majestic. People of Quraysh, save yourselves from Hell, because I cannot be of any help to you. My position is like one who, seeing the enemy, ran to warn his people before they were taken by surprise, shouting as he ran: ‘Beware! Beware!’”

After these powerful words were delivered, the Messenger’s very own uncle, Abu Lahab, threw sand in the direction of his nephew and retorted in anger, “May you be cursed! Is this why you called us here?”

The Messenger asked the people, “Will any of you believe in me and help me in this matter?”

His tribesmen looked silently back at him with a blank stare. The wood and stone idols they worshipped stood behind them in and around the Sanctuary. Many of them worshipped many gods, and could not imagine coming back to life after death.

Then Ali, the ten-year old cousin of the Messenger, stood up and bravely exclaimed, “I will be with you and stand by you!”

The people burst out into laughter at the prospect of only a boy responding favorably that day. Shortly thereafter, the crowd dispersed.

Most people who listened to the Messenger would shake off the words and move on with their work. Later on they would remember what they heard as it crept back into their thoughts, like they would remember the light of a particularly radiant sunrise. While only a few people accepted the faith early on, a transformation seemed to be on the horizon.

From this point on, the Messenger openly preached the faith in front of the Sanctuary, at the marketplace, when visitors came to the City, and upon the arrival of pilgrims.

The Quraysh started to become very concerned. They believed that the spread of the faith could cause division and hurt their business. The Messenger was calling on people to submit to The Majestic, alone, which would cause their idol gods to be eliminated, and could potentially reduce travelers from visiting the City to pay polytheistic homage as they had in the past. The Quraysh made huge profits selling idols to the visiting pilgrims. They decided to go to Abu Talib, the Messenger's uncle and one of highest authorities in the City.

The Quraysh asked him, "Abu Talib, you enjoy a position of honor and respect among us. We have requested you to stop your nephew, but you have not taken any action. We certainly cannot just sit and do nothing when he continues to speak ill of our forefathers and to ridicule us and our gods. You have to stop him, or we will fight him and you over this question until one of the two parties is destroyed."

When his guests had left, Abu Talib called the Messenger to him and confided, "Oh my nephew, you see the difficulty of my situation. Do not put my life and your life at risk, and do not burden me with what I cannot bear."

Overcome with emotion, the Messenger responded, "Uncle, should they give me the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left hand in return for abandoning my call, I would not do anything of the sort until The Majestic has brought this message to triumph or until I have perished."

The Messenger then turned away from his uncle, tears streaming down his face and his features set with absolute conviction.

He braced himself against further denunciation and began to walk away.

Calling him back, Abu Talib reassured the Messenger, "My nephew, you may go and say whatever you like. I will never withdraw my protection from you, and never will I let you down."¹⁶

With that, the Messenger breathed a sigh of relief and joy. Abu Talib looked at the Messenger. The man who stood before him was indeed the son of his brother and the same incredible boy whom he had raised as one of his own.

Even when all of the sub-tribes of the Quraysh united against Abu Talib, pressuring him to hand over his nephew, he was unrelenting to their demands. Abu Talib would continue to bravely protect the Messenger for as long as he could, despite persistent opposition. His uncle wrote eloquent poetry criticizing the Quraysh for not respecting their own way of life.¹⁷

6. The Quiz

Upon hearing that a man in the City was claiming to be the Last Messenger, the Quraysh sent emissaries to the Jews in Yathrib to gain information from the people of the Book on how to question him. The Quraysh did not believe he was a messenger, wanted to discredit him, but did not know how. The Jews advised the Quraysh to ask him about the Prophets Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, all of whom were unknown to the people of the City. Pleased, the Quraysh went to the Messenger and posed the suggested questions. Like the majority of those in the tribe, the Messenger could neither read nor write, and thus he had not learned these Prophets' stories beforehand.¹⁸

The Majestic then revealed to the Messenger, who recited from the Book the heart-wrenching life story of Joseph, Jacob, and their family in and around Egypt. The Quraysh were shocked that the Messenger was able to answer questions to which their tribe had no previous knowledge.

Another delegation was sent to Yathrib to get more questions to test the Messenger. The Jews were surprised that the first set of questions failed to stump him.

They suggested that the Quraysh ask three things, "Ask him about the story of the young men that entered a cave and slept a long time. Ask him about a man that traveled the world from the East to the West and who had experiences that are legends. Ask him about the soul and what is it made of."

When the Quraysh asked the Messenger these questions, he responded confidently, "Come back to me tomorrow, and I will tell you the answers to these three questions."

However, when the next day came, the Messenger had not received new revelation because he had not said "if The Majestic wills," when he responded. He did not make up the words in The Book himself, but waited for The Majestic to reveal authentic verses to him.

Two weeks went by and the Quraysh mocked him for not sharing answers to their quiz.

Addressing the Messenger, the Quraysh ridiculed, "Has your false spirit abandoned you?"

It was then that The Majestic revealed and the Messenger eloquently recited from The Book,

"...Do you think that the people of the Cave and the Inscription were a wonder among Our Signs?"

"(Remember) when the young men fled for refuge to the Cave, they said, 'Our Lord! Bestow on us mercy from Yourself, and facilitate for us our affair in the right way!'"

"Therefore We covered up their hearing (causing them, to go in deep sleep) in the Cave for a number of years.

"Then We raised them up (from their sleep), that We might test which of the two parties was best at calculating the time period that they had tarried.

"We narrate unto you their story with truth: Truly! They were young men who believed in their Lord, and We increased them in guidance.

"And We made their hearts firm and strong when they stood up and said, 'Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, never

shall we call upon any god other than Him; if we did, we should indeed have uttered an enormity in disbelief.

“ ‘Our people have taken for worship gods other than Him. Why do they not bring for them a clear authority? And who does more wrong than he who invents a lie against God?’

“ ‘And when you withdraw from them, and that which they worship, except God, then seek refuge in the Cave, your Lord will open a way for you from His Mercy and will make easy for you your affair.’

“And you might have seen the sun, when it rose, declining to the right from their Cave, and when it set, turning away from them to the left, while they lay in the midst of the Cave. That is (one) of the signs of God. He whom God guides, is rightly guided; but he whom He sends astray, for him you will find no guiding friend to lead him.

“And you would have thought them awake, while they were asleep. And We turned them on their right and on their left sides, and their dog stretching forth his two forelegs at the entrance. Had you looked at them, you would certainly have turned back from them in flight, and would certainly have been filled with awe of them.

“Likewise, We awakened them that they might question one another. A speaker from among them said, ‘How long have you stayed (here)?’ They said, ‘We have stayed a day or part of a day.’ They said, ‘Your Lord knows best how long you have stayed (here). So send one of you with this silver coin of yours to the town, and let him find out which is the good lawful food, and bring some of that to you. And let him be careful and let no man know of you.’

“ ‘For if they come to know of you, they will stone you or turn you back to their religion, and in that case you will never be successful.’

“And thus We made their case known to the people, that they might know that the Promise of God is true, and that there can be no doubt about the Hour. (Remember) when they (the people of the city) disputed among themselves about their case, they said, ‘Construct a building over them, their Lord knows best about them,’ (then) those who won their point said, ‘We verily shall build a place of worship over them.’

“...And they stayed in their Cave three hundred (solar) years, and add nine (for lunar years)...

“And they ask you about Dhul-Qarnain. Say, ‘I shall recite to you something of his story.’

“Verily, We established him in the earth, and We gave him the means of everything.

“So he followed a way.

“Until, when he reached the setting place of the sun, he found it setting in a spring of black muddy water. And he found near it a people. We said, ‘O Dhul-Qarnain! Either you punish them, or treat them with kindness.’

“He said, ‘As for him who does wrong, we shall punish him; and then he will be brought back unto his Lord, who will punish him with a terrible torment.’

“ ‘But as for him who believes and works righteousness, he shall have the best reward, and we shall speak unto him mild words.’

“Then he followed another way,

“Until, when he came to the rising place of the sun, he found it rising on a people for whom We had provided no shelter against the sun.

“So (it was)! And We knew all about him.

“Then he followed (another) way,

“Until, when he reached between two mountains, he found before them (those two mountains) a people who scarcely understood a word.

“They said, ‘O Dhul-Qarnain! Verily! Gog and Magog are doing great mischief in the land. Shall we then pay you a tribute in order that you might erect a barrier between us and them?’

“He said, ‘That in which my Lord had established me is better. So help me with strength (of men), I will erect between you and them a barrier.’

“Give me pieces of iron,’ then, when he had filled up the gap between the two mountain-cliffs, he said, ‘Blow,’ until when he had made it (red as) fire, he said, ‘Bring me molten copper to pour over it.’

“So they (Gog and Magog) were made powerless to scale it or dig through it.

“(Dhul-Qarnain) said, ‘This is a mercy from my Lord, but when the Promise of my Lord comes, He shall level it down to the ground. And the Promise of my Lord is ever true.’

“And on that Day [i.e. Gog and Magog will come out], We shall leave them to surge like waves on one another, and the Trumpet will be blown, and We shall collect them all together...

“Say, ‘If the sea were ink for the Words of my Lord, surely, the sea would be exhausted before the Words of my Lord would be finished, even if we brought (another sea) like it for its aid...’”¹⁹

It turned out that the last item posed by the Jews and Quraysh was in fact a trick question, for nobody has complete knowledge of what the soul is made of, except for The Majestic. Once again, the Quraysh were flabbergasted at how the Messenger was able to obtain such information in response to their questions. The Jews were also at a loss, left scratching their heads.

7. Last Third of the Night

The Quraysh tried to ban the recitation of the Book in public. They would raise their voices to drown out the verses and curse both the One who revealed the Book and the Messenger.

During the last third of the night, when sleep is so dear and the night is still, The Majestic descends down to the lowest heaven. The Messenger would consistently wake up to pray and recite from the Book. Since the City was a relatively small place, the neighbors could hear the beautiful verses if they listened closely.

Before one particular dawn, three shadows crept through the streets of the City. Three leaders of the Quraysh – Abu Jahl, Abu Sufyan, and their elder friend – independently got out of bed and walked to just outside the Messenger’s house to overhear his recitation, which was filled with heartfelt rhythm and deep meaning. Despite their fervent opposition to the faith, the three Qurayshi leaders bumped into each other, listening secretly to what they had banned in

public. They quickly fabricated dull excuses, embarrassed deep down at having their curiosity exposed.

The following night, while the Messenger was reciting from the Book, the same three shadows found their way near the Messenger's doorstep in the middle of the night. They listened, believing themselves to be alone and unseen. At dawn, they dispersed and stumbled upon one another again while walking back to their homes. Each explained away their presence, feeling ruffled at being seen out again near dawn. With great stealth, Abu Jahl, Abu Sufyan, and their friend made a third attempt the next night, craning their necks closer to the Messenger's door, petrified of being found by their friends. As the first glimmer of light appeared over the open alleyways of the City, the three friends spied each other again for the third consecutive night. Riled up, the Qurayshi leaders made a promise, that they would not listen to The Book again.

In the morning, the elder friend came to Abu Sufyan and asked, "What is your opinion about what we heard?"

Abu Sufyan turned his face to his friend, "First you tell me your opinion."

"By God," the friend said candidly, "it seems to be the truth."

Abu Sufyan was noncommittal, "Some of what he said, I understood everything, but others were beyond my comprehension."

The friend then approached Abu Jahl and asked, "I want to know your honest opinion about what we heard."

Abu Jahl furrowed his brow and reflected on the history of his family and that of the Messenger's.

"Our tribes have always been in competition with one another," Abu Jahl began passionately. "When they began to give food to the pilgrims, we also began to give food. When they began to give water, we began to give water to the pilgrims. When they showed bravery, we showed bravery. When they had the flag of battle, we had the flag of battle. Until finally we were like two horses about to get to the finish line, and now they tell us they have a Messenger who The Majestic inspires from the Heavens. How can we compete with that? By God, as long as I live, I will never accept him."²⁰

8. Poet of the City

Walid's words were mighty. He was the unparalleled poet of the City and a wealthy chief in his sub-tribe. His poetry moved the hearts of people like the wind scattered dust in the streets. When other cities on the Peninsula had poetry competitions, he would represent his town.

Once the Messenger was at the Sanctuary reciting from the Book. The words, rhythm, tone, and style that came out of his mouth were completely unprecedented. They were not like any verses known to man.

Walid was nearby, listening without interrupting. For the first time, the words moved his heart.

Walid said, "By God, I have heard a speech from the Praiseworthy right now. It is neither from the speech of men or the speech of jinn. Even what he said is beautiful prose. The top of it is fertile. The height of it is beautiful. It has a sweetness. It has a

rhythm. It surpasses everything I have heard and nothing can surpass it."

Jinn are creatures made of smokeless fire.

The famous poet's remarks spread quickly amongst the people of the City, including the notorious Abu Jahl. He rushed to Walid's house.

Abu Jahl jabbed, "Your people have heard that you have praised the Book, and they will not be satisfied with you until you dissociate from the Praiseworthy."

Walid responded, "What do you want me to say?"

Abu Jahl suggested, "Call him a madman."

Walid reacted, "But he is not a madman. Everyone knows he is not a madman. We have seen crazy people, and he has not symptoms of a crazy man."

Abu Jahl argued, "Call him a fortune teller."

Walid responded, "But he is not a fortune teller..."

Abu Jahl suggested, "Say he is a magician."

"But he is not a magician." Walid countered logically, "Magicians have their invocations and their tarot cards. He does not have any of these."

"Say he is a poet," Abu Jahl said.

Walid disagreed, "By God, I am the best poet amongst you and none of you can compete in poetry with me. I am telling you that this is not the type of poetry that we are used to."

"You need to say something!" Abu Jahl exclaimed. "We will not be satisfied with you until you say something."

Walid requested, "Leave me alone for a few days."²¹

Abu Jahl left. In private, Walid frowned and pensively paced his house in deep contemplation. After some time, he thought of what to say, proud of his latest idea. Before Walid could utter his latest devised invention to anyone in public, The Majestic preemptively revealed new verses in the Book –

"Leave Me Alone [to deal] with whom I created Alone,

"And then granted him resources in abundance.

"And children to be by his side!

"And made life smooth and comfortable for him!

"After all that he desires that I should give more;

"Nay! Verily, he has been stubborn and opposing Our verses.

"I shall oblige him to face a severe torment!

"Verily, he thought and plotted;

"So let him be cursed! How he plotted!

"And once more let him be cursed, how he plotted!

"Then he thought;

"Then he frowned, and he looked in a bad tempered way;

"Then he turned back and was proud;

"Then he said, 'This is nothing but magic from that of old;

" 'This is nothing but the word of a human being!'

"I will cast him into Hell-fire."²²

9. Negotiations

Desperate and unwilling to sit idle, the Quraysh devised a plan, trying to dissuade the Messenger, "You worship our gods one day, and we'll worship The Majestic the next day."

The Messenger was not willing to compromise in this manner and rejected the polytheistic proposal.

The Majestic revealed,
"...I will not worship
That which you worship,
Nor will you worship
That which I worship.
To you be your way,
And to me mine."²³

The Quraysh tried again, "You want women? We'll marry you to the most beautiful virgins in the Quraysh."

The Messenger easily rejected this proposal too.²⁴

After sunset one morning, the powerful leaders of the Quraysh gathered at the Sanctuary and discussed the issue they had with the Messenger's efforts. They realized that a different tact of negotiation could possibly help resolve the matter. The Quraysh sent a representative to the Messenger.

The representative said to him, "No man in the history of the nation has ever caused his community a problem like the one you have caused; you have insulted our forefathers, criticized our beliefs, reviled our gods, ridiculed our sages, and caused division within our community. Indeed, you have been the cause of every bad thing in the relationship between you and us.

"Nevertheless, we have the following offer to make to you. If you have started this matter of yours in order to become rich, we will pay you from our own money until you are the wealthiest among us. If it is honor that you are seeking, we are prepared to make you our leader, and if you seek a kingdom, we will make you our king. On the other hand, if what you experience is some sort of evil spirit which you cannot control, we will seek medical treatment for you and will pay for whatever is required of us until you have been cured or until we have done everything we can."

The tribal people of the Peninsula had never been unified under one king, and yet they were willing to unite in opposition to the message. Many great men would have accepted the Quraysh's advances, but the Messenger turned down their offers one after the other, as he was on a mission and could not succumb to vain desires.

"I am not after your money, and I do not seek a position or a crown," the Messenger responded. "The Majestic has made me His messenger and revealed to me a book and instructed me to give you a message of good tidings and a warning. I have conveyed The Majestic's message to you as best as I could, and I have given you

good counsel. If you accept it from me, it will be good for you in this life and in the life to come. If you turn it down, I will continue to preach it until The Majestic settles the issue between us."²⁵

The Qurayshi representative leaned back, relaxed, and listened as the Messenger gave his response.

Then the Messenger recited from the Book until he reached the verse, "But if they turn away, then say, 'I have warned you of a destructive awful torment like the torment which overtook Ad and Thamud.'"²⁶

At this, the representative jumped up, put his hand over the mouth of the Messenger, and implored, "I beg you, by God, and by the rights I have over you as your blood relative to stop, and don't send this punishment."

The representative hurried back to the Qurayshi leaders and said, "Listen to me. Leave this man alone because I have heard a speech from him that I have never heard before, and I could not comprehend all of it. However, he is going to have an importance. If the people get rid of him for us, then our hands are clean. If he wins over the people, then by God, his victory is our victory, and his power is our power."

The Qurayshi leaders stared at the ruffled representative and concluded, "He has bewitched you like he bewitched everybody else."²⁷

10. Test of Wills

When both the Messenger and his Uncle, Abu Talib, rejected desperate Qurayshi attempts to suffocate the message from spreading, the Quraysh resorted to terrorizing and brutalizing the believers, especially those who lacked social status or noble lineage. Slaves who accepted the faith were beaten, tortured, and asked to renounce their belief in The Majestic.

One of the Messenger's friends reflected, "The believers were tortured in the early faith so severely and they were starved and deprived of water until they could not even sit up out of pain..."

The Quraysh would place iron on the bodies of some of the believers, drag them to the sand, and leave them there in the blazing desert sun. Almost all of the believers succumbed to Qurayshi pressure, forcing them to say things in favor of idols although deep down they still believed in The Majestic and the Last Messenger. The only one who never caved under such brutal torture was a believing slave named Bilal.

A gang of young Quraysh seized Bilal, tied a rope around his neck, and dragged him through the streets.

Bilal would not give in and instead firmly proclaimed, "He is One! He is One!"²⁸

Other times, even his slave owner would tie a large rock to Bilal's chest and leave him pinned without water in the desert for the whole day! The rocks got so hot in the sun that somebody could have cooked raw meat on them.

Despite all of the brutality, Bilal asserted, "I reject the idols, and I will believe in The Majestic!"

While Bilal still survived and held firm to his faith, the oppressive, idol-worshipping Quraysh were not brought to justice during this period.

The Messenger's best friend, Abu Bakr, would come upon slave owners in the act of torturing their servants. Abu Bakr expended his personal wealth to buy the freedom of seven slaves. The Majestic promised great reward for such noble acts. The Messenger was particularly happy with Abu Bakr's selfless actions.

An enslaved family of four, including father, mother, and two sons, accepted the faith early on. Abu Jahl of the Quraysh learned of this and was incredibly displeased. He organized a group to systematically torture the family of four who believed in The Majestic and the Messenger. The father, Yasir, watched in horror as this brutality was being carried out against his wife and children. Despite the suffering that they went through, they held firm to their faith.

The Messenger passed by one day while the Quraysh were torturing this family. He was outnumbered and could not free them. In fact, during that time, the Messenger was only permitted by The Majestic to spread the faith peacefully without the use of any military action.

The Messenger said, "Be patient, oh family of Yasir! Indeed your place that is appointed for you by The Majestic is Heaven."

Weeks went by as Abu Jahl continued his torture tactics. Brave Yasir was the first to be martyred for believing in The Majestic and the Messenger. The wife of the family protested the treatment she was

being subjected to. Abu Jahl was so angered that he grabbed a spear and viciously thrust it up her lower private part. Then the eldest son was murdered. Traumatized to see his whole family killed in cold blood, the youngest son gave up and was released alive.

Given the hard times, some of the believers complained to the Messenger, "Will you not pray to The Majestic to help us?"

The Messenger was sitting, with his back to the Sanctuary structure.

He came forward and responded, "Among believers who lived before you, there were many who were placed in a hole dug in the ground and were sawn in halves, from head to foot; and there were some whose flesh was torn with combs of iron which also broke their bones. They did not turn away from their faith. By The Majestic, the divine One will certainly accomplish His purpose until an individual traveler can travel...fearing no one but The Majestic...You are only precipitating events."

11. Vying for the King's Favor

As more people were drawn to the Messenger's call, the fury of the Quraysh swelled and swamped the believers. They placed oppressive sanctions and boycotts on the Messenger, the believers, and his clan of origin.

At this time, the Messenger was commanded by The Majestic to encourage groups of believers to escape persecution and emigrate to Abyssinia, present-day Ethiopia. Some believers had at least some familiarity trading goods in this foreign land, and they hoped to find a greater sense of justice than what they experienced in the City.

The Messenger said to a group of believers, "There is a king in Abyssinia who does not oppress his people. He is a just king because he does not persecute his subjects and does not interfere in their religion."

A group of 17 noble believers, including the Messenger's daughter, Ruqayyah, and son-in-law, made preparations for the trip. There was only so much each traveler could bring along to start their new life. Thus, the vast majority of their belongings, property, and money were left behind in the City.

A woman who had decided to journey with the group was loading her camel.

Umar, who had not accepted the faith yet, passed by and asked her, "Where are you traveling to?"

She turned her back to what little she could fit on the beast and faced Umar angrily, "This is all because of you and your terrorizing of us and persecution of us, just because we want to worship The Majestic. Because of your persecution, we have to go somewhere else and find a land where we can worship The Majestic."

Umar said compassionately, "Has the matter reached that level? May The Majestic be with you."

The woman was surprised to hear such a response from Umar. When her husband returned, she excitedly told him what Umar had said.

Her husband reflected, "Do you really think that he is going to be merciful to us and accept the faith? By The Majestic, the donkeys of his father's house will embrace the faith before he does."²⁹

The group of 12 men and 5 women left their tribe and many life-long friends, making the journey to Africa, seeking refuge from the persecution of the Quraysh and hoping to gain back their freedom. The trip was only a few days. Before arriving at their destination, they sent a request to Negus, the Christian King of Abyssinia, asking permission to live there. When it was granted, they entered and began their acclimation to a different culture, language, and climate. In Abyssinia, the emigrants were treated with respect by the locals and were not ridiculed for their belief.

The emigrants heard a rumor just three months after relocating that the Quraysh had accepted the faith. They heard that the boycott was over, and that safety could be found in their homeland, the City.

Surprised and excited, they made preparations to visit the City. On their way, a traveling caravan informed them that the news they had heard was not true and that the Quraysh were still persecuting those of the faith. The situation at home was indeed bleak for believers. Before re-entering the City, several of the emigrants sought the safe protection of long-time friends who were still living there. They stayed in their original home land for less than a month before realizing it would be better to go back and enjoy the justice in Abyssinia. Upon learning that the emigrants had a decent experience living in the new place, with access to food and a sense of security, more than 80 believers accompanied the emigrants from the City this time and sought refuge in Abyssinia.

The exodus of such a noticeable proportion of the population was an incredible embarrassment and shame to the Quraysh. Commerce was negatively affected, but their pride was pierced even deeper to see their own sons and brothers, daughters and sisters, fleeing from the City.

Concerned about the repercussions the emigration would have on their reputation, the Quraysh sent two clever men in pursuit of the emigrants. One of the men, Amr, was a shrewd, cunning politician. When they arrived in Abyssinia, Amr and his friend visited the Ethiopian elite, including the generals, bishops, and ministers.

Showering them with precious gifts, Amr and his friend addressed the Abyssinian leaders, "We have in your midst a group of renegades and rebels; we will speak to the Negus tomorrow about their case, and we want you to hand them back to us and support us in this cause."

The following day, the two Qurayshi ambassadors made their way into the court of the Christian King of Abyssinia. The ebony man before them had a sparkle in his eye and a serenity about him that comes from doing what is good and just in the land. As they made their way up to the King, the two Qurayshi men were acutely aware of the bribed Abyssinian elite peppering the places and pews of the court.

Upon meeting the Negus, Amr said, "Some foolish youth from amongst our nation have emigrated to your country. They have left our religion, and they have not embraced your religion...The leaders of

our community have sent us to you in order that you hand these young, foolish people back to us so that we can deal with them because we are more knowledgeable of their faults than anybody else."³⁰

Amr and his friend presented Negus with gifts, including leather and expensive incense. Amr was so desperate that he also insinuated that the emigrants were an unknown social entity and stoked fear in the Abyssinian palace.

The royal ministers responded, "Oh our ruler, verily what they have said makes complete sense. These are strangers in our land. We do not know anything about them. Return them back to their people. Let them deal with their affairs."

Negus was not immediately swayed by the political pressure of his ministers nor bewitched by the apparent bribery of Amr.

Turning his back to the glistening goods, he said sensibly, "Know by God, I cannot just hand them back after they have chosen my land over all the other lands they could have chosen. They asked for my protection. The least that I can do is to listen to their side of the story."

Negus sent a representative to the emigrants. Jaafer, who was a cousin of the Messenger, would take the lead in representing the believers to the Abyssinian King. He was a highly eloquent and very handsome man, closest to the Messenger in physical form and character.

Negus said to Jaafer, "Come all of you to the palace tomorrow and explain to us why your people are opposed to you."

Given that they had never met Negus, the believers became concerned and wondered what they were going to say.

Jaafer resolutely stated, "We will only say what the Messenger told us to say, and we are not going to change the truth no matter what happens."

When the appointed time came, Amr and his friend re-entered the palace and prostrated with flair in front of Negus, who was surrounded by his advisors and patriarchs. Then the emigrants entered the palace. Jaafer walked in upright with dignity and did not prostrate to Negus, despite his life hanging in the balance.

The ministers rebuked him, "How dare you walk in without prostrating to the Negus?"

"Our Messenger told us that we can only prostrate to our Lord," Jaafer responded with poise.

Through a translator, Negus asked, "Tell me what is this... that you have now invented? What is the matter that you have forsaken the religion of your people and you haven't embraced my religion nor have you embraced the other religions on earth?"

Feeling the gravity of the situation, Jaafer said, "We were a people in ignorance. We worshipped idols and ate carrion. We used to sever our kin ties. We were bad to our neighbors. Amongst us there were the strong that ate the weak. We were just like that until The Majestic One sent amongst us a Messenger. We know him. We know where he came from. We know his truthfulness. We know his forbearance. He called us to The Majestic One. He prohibited us from worshipping idols which we and our forefathers had worshiped alongside The Majestic One. He commanded us to say, 'The Majestic is one, without any equals.' He told us all the benefits of the faith. We gave him a favorable response, believed in him, and gave him our full support. We followed the commandments from The Majestic One, conveyed by the Messenger. We began to worship The Majestic One alone, refraining from what He forbade us and accepting what He made lawful for us.

"Our people however, assaulted us and subjected us to physical torture to compel us to revert to idolatrous worship and to indulge in the sinful practices we used to indulge in. Having been overpowered, oppressed, and denied the freedom to choose our faith and practice it, we sought refuge in your country, choosing you in preference to all other rulers, hoping that in your refuge we would suffer no injustice."³¹

Upon hearing Jaafer's passionate appeal, Negus was intrigued and probed, "Do you have any revelation that this Messenger says he has?"

Jaafer responded, "Yes, I do."

Negus requested, "Recite it for me."

Jaafer then recited the beginning chapter of Mary, mother of Jesus, from the Book,

"In the name of The Majestic, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

"...This is a recital of the Mercy of your Master to His Servant Zachariah.

"Behold; he cried to his Master in secret,

"Praying: 'O my Master! Infirm indeed are my bones, and the hair of my head glistens with grey: but never am I unblest, O my Master, in my prayer to You!

"Now I fear what my relatives will do after me: but my wife is barren: so give me an heir as from Yourself -

"One that will truly represent me, and represent the posterity of Jacob; and make him, O my Master, One with whom You are well-pleased!

"His prayer was answered: 'O Zachariah! We give you good news of a son: his name shall be John. On none by that name have We conferred distinction before.'

"He said, 'Oh my Master! How shall I have a son, when my wife is barren and I have grown quite decrepit from old age?'

"He said, 'So it will be: Your Master says, 'That is easy for Me: I did indeed create you before, when you had been nothing!'

"...Relate in the Book the story of Mary, when she withdrew from her family to a place in the East.

"She placed a screen from them; then We sent to her Our spirit, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects.

"She said: 'I seek refuge from you to The Majestic, Most Gracious! Come not near if you have fear of The Majestic.'

"He said: 'Nay, I am only a messenger from your Master, to announce to you the gift of a righteous son.'

"She said: 'How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?'

"He said: 'So it will be: Your Master says, 'That is easy for Me! And We wish to appoint him as a Sign unto men and a Mercy from Us: it is a matter so decreed.'"

"So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place.

"...At length she brought the baby to her people, carrying him in her arms. They said: 'O Mary! Truly an amazing thing have you brought!'

"O sister of Aaron! Your father was not a man of evil, nor your mother a woman unchaste!'

"But she pointed to the baby. They said, 'How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?'

"He [Baby Jesus] said: 'I am indeed a servant of The Majestic: He has given me revelation and made me a messenger;

"And He has made me blessed wheresoever I be, and has enjoined on me Prayer and Charity as long as I live:

"He has made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable

"So Peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the Day that I shall be raised up to life again!'

"Such was Jesus the son of Mary: it is a statement of truth, about which they vainly dispute."³²

Jaafer's voice echoed through the halls of the palace, where so often the name of Jesus was mentioned, but never quite this way. The Christian priests, ministers, and even the King leaned in to hear what more he had to say.

"The Messenger tells us," Jaafer said, glowing from the recitation of the Book, "that Jesus is to be honored and his mother, Mary, is to be honored."

Negus and his patriarchs began weeping upon hearing the beauty of the recitation from the Book's verses of their own Zachariah, John, Mary, and Jesus. He then wept on hearing the translation.

Negus lifted his tear-stained face, steadied his voice, and said, "I swear by God, this recitation and the messages of Moses and Jesus have sprung forth from the same fountain."

Negus dismissed the two men from Quraysh, and assured Jaafer and the group of emigrants that they would continue to have his full protection.³³

The two Qurayshi men were shown out of the palace of Negus, their faces ashen at their sudden fall from grace. As they sulked away from the court of nobles, their lavish gifts now seemed like such a waste.

After brooding over the situation, Amr made a last ditch attempt to thwart Jaafer and the emigrants.

Going back to Negus, Amr implored, "Before you make a decision, you should know that the emigrants believe that Jesus was a servant, a slave."

The next day, a royal emissary was dispatched to the believers, and he said, "Come immediately to the palace. We want to know what your position is on Jesus Christ."

The emigrants became even more concerned than they were by the first summons. Nevertheless, they returned to the palace.

Negus asked, "What do you say about Jesus?"

Jaafer replied calmly, "Our Messenger says that Jesus is The Majestic's servant and messenger. He is His spirit and His word delivered unto virgin Mary."

Negus was impressed by the simplicity of the message.

He picked up a short branch from the floor and concluded, "By God, what you have just said does not exceed what Jesus Christ said by this much of a branch."

Upon hearing that Negus likened the message of the believers with that brought by Jesus, Negus' patriarchs protested loudly as they believed the King of Abyssinia ought to distinguish the Christian word over any other!

Negus faced his court and proclaimed over their cries, "It is true, no matter what you say."

He then turned to Amr and said, "Be gone from here and take all of your gifts back with you. I have no need for them."

His patriarchs returned the gifts to Amr and his friend, who were humiliated and flustered again.

The air was thick with tension as Negus turned away from his patriarchs and faced the emigrants from the City.

Negus said to Jaafer and the emigrants, "You are safe in my land. Whosoever harms you will be brought to justice. I would not harm any one of you for a mountain of gold."³⁴

Word of the encounter spread like wildfire through Abyssinia. Soon, some spread a rumor that Negus had become a heretic and abandoned the faith of their forefathers, increasing the risk of a coup d'état. Negus quickly learned what was being said. He sent an emissary to the emigrants to inform them of the political challenge he was facing, and to tip them off of the possibility that he may soon be killed.

"If you hear news of my death, I have instructed one of my ships to be at a specified place and it will be yours with its captain. Go wherever you please," offered Negus to the emigrants.

Negus took a parchment and wrote, "There is no Master but The Majestic and the Praiseworthy is His servant and Jesus is His messenger..."

Negus folded the piece of parchment and slipped it into the upper part of his robe. He summoned the instigators into his private chambers.

Dignified, Negus addressed them, "What is your problem with me? Have I not been a good king to you?"

They said, "Yes."

Negus asked, "Have I not been a just ruler?"

"Yes," they said.

Negus pressed them to be direct with him.

Bending before their King's determination, the instigators responded, "You have abandoned our religion. You have heretical beliefs."

"What do you believe?" Negus asked.

They replied, "We believe Jesus Christ is the son of God. He is our Lord. He is our Savior. He is a third of the trinity."

Negus pointed to the concealed parchment in his robe, resting by his heart, and said, "I swear by God, that *this* is exactly what I believe."

The Christians thought he was agreeing with them, when instead Negus believed what he had written on the parchment. Nevertheless, the rumors soon settled and the Christians of the palace became content for the time being.

A time came in Abyssinia when another powerful family challenged Negus' rule of the land. The confrontation escalated into a civil war. The emigrants became concerned that Negus would be defeated. They supplicated to The Majestic to let Negus win and retain his position. They sent a believer to witness the battle between the army of Negus and the opposition on the banks of the Nile River. A few days later, he returned to the emigrants with a smile, delivering the news that the forces of Negus had won, and he would remain as king.

12. House of al-Arqam

People in the City buzzed about their business, in and out of the Sanctuary area daily. Harassing the believers was now part and parcel of life in the City. The Messenger found it more difficult than ever to assemble in public without endangering his friends. Nestled at the foot of Mount Safa, walking distance from the Sanctuary and at the center of the beehive that was the City, the Messenger visited the spacious house of his trusted friend, al-Arqam.

Al-Arqam was a 20-year-old nobleman from the family of the notorious Abu Jahl. Additionally, he happened to be among the first to embrace the faith. Until this time, he kept his faith a secret, and offered his home as the strategic headquarters where the believers could meet routinely and securely. At the nucleus of the City, the enemies of the faith did not bat an eyelash seeing the believers on the well-trodden path between the Sanctuary and the house of al-Arqam.

Standing by Mount Safa one day, Abu Jahl was in a bad mood. Spotting the Messenger ignited his fury, and Abu Jahl unleashed curses on him and his ancestors like he had never done before. The Messenger stayed silent, enduring the disgusting insults until Abu Jahl walked away. Some women of the Messenger's sub-tribe who witnessed the dreadful scene were appalled by the verbal abuse thrown at their fellow tribal members and the outright disparaging of their family honor. They took their complaints to Humza, a well-known hunter and archer in the City and a dear uncle of the Messenger.

Famed for his strength and bravery, Humza would venture into the desert all alone for hunting. Humza had been away on a hunting expedition during the incident involving Abu Jahl. After paying his respects at the Sanctuary and circling it several times, he returned home to the grievances of the women.

They asked him, "What type of uncle are you? What type of leader are you...when your own nephew is insulted and no one stands up to defend him?"

Humza responded in surprise, "What happened?"

The women listed curse after curse spewed by Abu Jahl, and Humza felt his blood boil.

He asked out of pride, "Was this a public insult?"

They responded, "The whole of the City saw it!"

Still wearing his hunting gear, muscles heaving and feeling angry, he marched to the culprit of this injustice. He drew his bow and struck Abu Jahl on the head, causing blood to gush onto the sand below.

"How dare you curse my own nephew!" Humza roared, "I too am a follower of his faith."

Everyone stood shocked, including Humza himself. The tribesmen around Abu Jahl finally reacted, rushing to his defense.

"Leave him be," Abu Jahl mumbled, "for by God, today I cursed his nephew like I never cursed him before."

Humza withdrew back home and mulled over his situation. He had not planned to submit to the faith, but now he had declared it to everyone and could not turn back out of pride.

He sat alone and supplicated to The Majestic, "You know that I am one of the leaders of the Quraysh, and I have now said something that I cannot take back. If this matter is true, then cause my heart to be guided to it, and if it is not true, then cause me to die right now."³⁵

After having a miserable night where he slept little, he visited the Messenger. Humza explained what had happened and asked for his advice. The Messenger spoke to him with great care and passion about the faith. The beauty of the message unfolded, seeming more vibrant with each added truth that settled in Humza's heart.

Humza reflected and decided, "I testify that you are a truthful person, and you are speaking the truth, and now I don't ever want to return to the paganism or the religion of my forefathers."

This was a huge boost to the Messenger's cause because he had gained a follower who was famed and feared, an elite from the elders of the Quraysh. The enemies of the faith were forced to reduce their level of open animosity.

"Oh Majestic One," the Messenger had supplicated, "bring glory to the faith with one of these two men who is the more beloved to you - either Abu Jahl or Umar."

Abu Jahl's opposition to the message was possibly matched only by the censure of Umar, a powerful young, up-and-coming leader of the Quraysh. Towering over other men, he was a strong wrestler, warrior, and known for his wisdom in uniting the tribes of the City. The idea of a new faith splintering the tribes made him yearn for revenge against the Messenger.

Three days after Humza became a believer, Umar had an urge to have a drink with his friends. When he found none of his friends available, he decided to instead go to the Sanctuary and circle it in the dark. He came upon the Messenger, all alone praying to The Majestic One and reciting from the Book. Thinking that this was his

chance to take revenge, Umar quietly crept up to the Messenger. Before he could do anything, he froze as he listened in amazement at the rhythm and significance of the Book. He surmised that it must be the statement of a beautiful poet.

As the private thought passed Umar's mind, the Messenger recited, "It is not the word of a poet; little is that you believe!"³⁶

Umar did a double-take, convinced now that this must be coming from a sorcerer of some sort.

"Nor is it the word of a soothsayer," the Messenger then recited, "little is that you remember!"³⁷

Umar stood, cloaked by the night, racking his brain over where these words could possibly be coming from?

As if some entity was reading Umar's mind, the Messenger said, "This is the Revelation sent down from the Lord of the worlds."³⁸

Umar wondered if it were possible for the Messenger to be inventing it?

The Messenger then recited, "And if he had forged a false saying concerning Us, We surely should have seized him by his right hand and then certainly should have cut off his life artery."³⁹

Umar turned on his heel and retreated back home, contemplating over the almost telepathic experience, with The Majestic responding to each of Umar's private doubts through revelation. Umar felt something stir in his heart, as if belief were knocking on the door to his soul. He shut his mind to the thought and went back home.

The Qurayshi leaders gathered near the Sanctuary, deliberating.

"This man has done more to insult our fathers and gods than anybody else!" Abu Jahl exclaimed against the Messenger. "He has cursed our religion. He has said that anyone who worships idols will be punished and go to Hell. He is making fun of our forefathers. Who will finally rid us of this man? By God, anybody who succeeds

in doing it, I promise him 100 camels, red and black. I will also add 100 pouches of silver."

The Messenger was not guilty of cursing the idols nor had he mocked anyone's ancestors in the least. Yet the ransom was set.

Abu Jahl eagerly scanned the faces of those present until he heard, "Let me go do it."

It was Umar. Rising from his spot, he steamed home to retrieve his sword and proceeded in search of the Messenger. Umar thought he heard voices asking him what he was doing, trying to dissuade him. Embroiled in the moment, he ignored these and scoured the streets to assassinate the Messenger.

Umar encountered a man, who unbeknownst to him had secretly accepted the faith.

"Where are you going?" the man asked, concerned at Umar's frightening demeanor.

"We have been cursed too long," Umar thundered, tightening his grip on the hilt of his sword, "and our ancestors have been ridiculed. I am now going to kill this man, the Praiseworthy."

The believer gasped, alarmed at Umar's intent. He scrambled to buy time to warn the Messenger and distract his friend.

The believer said, "Your strength has certainly fooled you. Do you imagine that the...clan would leave you to walk these roads when you have killed the Praiseworthy? You would be better advised if you went back to your own household and put them on the right course."

"What do you mean," Umar asked, brow furrowed, "and who of my household?"⁴⁰

The believer disclosed, "Your brother-in-law and your sister have both followed the Praiseworthy."

Umar took a sharp intake of breath, enraged that his own sister could be a traitor to the faith of his father. He turned sharply, abandoning his friend and his previous mission, now marching toward his sister's house, still armed with his sword.

Eavesdropping at the door of her house, he was shocked to hear verses of the Book. Umar slammed on the door. Umar barged into his sister's home and pressed her and her husband about what they were doing. As they tried to deflect the situation and calm him down, Umar's anger flared. When he moved to hit his brother-in-law, his sister sprung up to defend her husband, and within seconds she was struck with Umar's blow instead and started bleeding from her lip. Umar recoiled, seeing his sister's blood.

"Yes indeed," his sister admitted, rising from her fallen state and wiping her lip, "we are believers; we believe in The Majestic and His Messenger. You may do as you please."

Seeing his sister's injured face, Umar felt regret for his sudden temper.

He sighed and then motioned to his sister, "Give me what you have been reading. Let me see what the Praiseworthy teaches."

She hesitated and told Umar that he would need to purify himself with water before reading the verses. Humoring her, he did so and finally read from the Book. The verses took root in his heart.

Umar asked, "Where is the Messenger now?"

His brother-in-law shared, "He is in the house of al-Arqam."

Umar went to the house of al-Arqam, still grasping his sword, and knocked on the door. When a believer saw who it was through the peep hole, he rushed to warn the Messenger.

Humza rose and said, "Shall we let him in? If he has come for something good, we will grant him that. If his motive is evil, we will kill him with his own sword."

Several believers escorted Umar to the Messenger.

The Messenger grabbed Umar's collar and drew him closer, asking, "What brings you here, Umar? It looks to me as if you will not mend your ways until a calamity has befallen you."

"Messenger of The Majestic!" Umar said, "I have come to you to declare that I believe in The Majestic and His Messenger, and accept what The Majestic has revealed."

The Messenger's face lit up as he proclaimed happily, "The Majestic is the greatest!"

Every believer had a newfound spring in their step, knowing that Umar was on their side, strengthening the cause. The enemies of the faith were up against a brave believer.

The next morning, Abu Jahl heard a knock on his door and swung it open to find his beloved nephew, Umar. He welcomed him with open arms and invited him in.

"I have come to tell you," Umar declared at the doorstep, "that I have embraced the faith and that I now believe in The Majestic and His Messenger."

Abu Jahl gasped mid-embrace, slamming the door, retorting, "Confound you and what you have come here for!"

Umar smiled and went on to the biggest gossip in the City and merrily shared the news that he had accepted the message. In no time, the entire City knew that Umar had joined the Messenger's cause. Umar found himself surrounded by several angry people, suddenly embroiled in combat. He swung his fists, wrestling and defending himself from the mob.

Finally he withdrew after an hour of struggling, saying, "You may do as you like. Had we been three hundred in number, I swear we would have fought it out with you to the bitter end."

After some time, Umar spearheaded forty believers to march to the Sanctuary, with Umar in the first row and Humza in the second row. They assembled in public and prostrated to The Majestic in unison for the first time after the persecutions. The Messenger was so pleased that he turned to Umar and gave him the nickname, "al-Farooq," which means, "The one who divides truth from falsehood." It was the beginning of a new dawn for the believers.

13. Boycott

With the faith gaining momentum, several of the Qurayshi sub-tribes convened a meeting to discuss what was to be done. They decided that they would attempt to kill the Messenger.

They went to Abu Talib and pressed him once again, "You do not have any choice in the matter. You will hand over the Praiseworthy, and we will give you whatever blood money...or we will have to cut you off from the Quraysh. None of us will allow you to get any food or water. We will boycott you. We will cut off our marriages with you."

Abu Talib became furious and responded, "Do as you please. I am not going to hand my nephew over to you."

He decided to move with two sub-tribes, which included the Messenger, the believers, and several nonbelievers to the valleys outside of downtown. To solidify the boycott, the Quraysh enacted a pact that nobody would engage in commerce with Abu Talib and the two sub-tribes, extend marriage proposals to them, or socialize with them. A signed treaty was hung inside the Sanctuary structure behind a locked door. The Quraysh believed that if they could starve the

Messenger's believers economically, then the Quraysh could break them spiritually.

The boycott and ban imposed by the Quraysh dragged on for between two to three years. Displaced to just outside of the City, the believers resorted to collecting rain water for hydration. Food was so scarce that many of the believers found themselves eating leaves for sustenance! Sometimes, a sympathizer would load up a camel with food, clothes, and supplies and send it wandering toward the believers at night. The most well-known nonbeliever to show such compassion was a man named al-Mutim.

The believers were suffering dearly, but many held steadfast to their beliefs. The Messenger's wife, Khadija, spent from her savings to support her husband and their family. The Messenger's best friend, Abu Bakr, had been a wealthy man before, but with the burden of the boycott, he spent all of his money for the sake of The Majestic, helping the believers who were in hardship.

When the caravans would come to the City to sell goods, the believers arrived to buy basic items. Abu Jahl would show up and manipulate the merchants to raise prices so high that the believers could not afford to purchase anything.

Because of the oppression placed on them, the Messenger made a supplication, raising his hands, "Oh Majestic One, send upon them a famine like the famine of Joseph."

It came to pass, so much so that the people of the City were forced to eat unthinkable things, like carrion.

It was five influential leaders of the Quraysh who found the courage to speak out against the boycott. They convened in secret, organizing together to stage an end to the harsh treaty.

One of the leaders arrived at the Sanctuary in the morning and circled it seven times.

"...By God," he then said to the people, "I shall not sit until this oppressive boycott covenant is torn to pieces."

Abu Jahl challenged him, "You are a liar. By God, no one will touch it."

"You are a worse liar!" Another one of the five leaders interjected, "We did not approve of it when it was written."

The three other leaders then stood one by one, strongly denouncing the boycott and challenging Abu Jahl.

Abu Jahl scowled, "This has been planned somewhere else. It could not have come on the spur of the moment."

The insects were hungry. The Majestic is great! The parchment reflecting the treaty was delicious. The Majestic is great! The bulk of the broadsheet was in their bellies. Now they left the rest hanging. The Majestic is great! The insects left the scene and went back to their home. The Majestic is great!

The Messenger told Abu Talib what had been revealed to him, "[Regarding] what they signed, The Majestic has shown me that it has been completely destroyed except for His name."⁴¹

Abu Talib summoned his brothers in the Quraysh and shared, "My nephew, who has never told a lie to me, has informed me that The Majestic has caused moths to eat up everything that contained injustice or boycott of kinsfolk in your covenant. The only thing that has remained is The Majestic's name. Let us go together and find out whether my nephew has told the truth. If what he says is true, then you give in and stop your injustice. If he has told a lie, I will give him up to you, and you may kill or spare him."

The Quraysh finally agreed and went into the Sanctuary structure to examine the treaty they had signed. To their amazement, moths had eaten everything of the scroll except for the words, 'In Your name, Our Lord,' just as the Messenger had foretold. The Quraysh ended the boycott and sanctions. Abu Talib, the Messenger, and the two sub-tribes moved from the valleys back to their respective homes in the City, lean from the years of hardship and scarcity of ample food.

14. Heartfelt Sorrow

Just over a month after returning, Abu Talib, the Messenger's uncle and childhood guardian, was on his death bed. He was over 70 years old. Abu Jahl, Abu Sufyan, and the Quraysh visited Abu Talib, urging him to convince the Messenger to compromise or desist from his efforts. The Quraysh knew that once Abu Talib died, the Messenger would be without political protection in their tribal system.

When the Messenger came, Abu Talib said, "These are the leaders of your people. They have asked to see you for an arrangement of give and take."

The Messenger addressed the Qurayshi leaders, "I ask of you only one word. Should you give me that, your authority...will be strengthened..."

Abu Jahl responded, "Yes, indeed. We will give you that, and ten words like it. What is it you ask of us?"

The Messenger said, "You declare that you believe in the Oneness of The Majestic and renounce the worship of any deity beside Him."

One of the Qurayshi delegates reacted, "Do you, Praiseworthy, want to have only one Lord instead of all those deities? That is very strange indeed!"

The leaders of the Quraysh departed in disapproval.

Abu Talib said, "My nephew, I do not think you asked them too much."⁴²

In Abu Talib's final moments, the Messenger tried to persuade his uncle to submit to the faith. Abu Talib was on the verge of saying the words that would make him a believer, but out of peer pressure from Qurayshi leaders and out of fear at what others might say about him, Abu Talib could not bring himself to submit to The Majestic by accepting the Messenger's faith.

Ali came to the Messenger to inform him that Abu Talib had passed away.

"Go and bury him," the Messenger instructed Ali.

Ali remarked, "But he died a polytheist."

Ali was disappointed that his father had not become a believer. Despite this, it was clear to everyone that during the life of Abu Talib, he had always protected the Messenger with great sacrifice.

The Messenger repeated, "Go and bury him. Come back as soon as you have finished burying him. Don't do anything on the way."⁴³

Ali buried his father and returned to the Messenger's home. The Messenger made a long supplication to The Majestic, which touched Ali's heart.

Shortly after, the infamous Abu Lahab became the head of Abu Talib's tribe. This was a difficult development for the Messenger, given how much Abu Lahab hated the Messenger and the believers. Persecution of the Messenger, who was now 50 years old, reached an all-time high with the change in tribal leadership. People of the City

disrespected and insulted the Messenger. These were gloomy, grim days for the believers.

And then calamity struck again. Just over a month after the passing of Abu Talib, the Messenger lost the central pillar of his household and love of his life. Khadija died. The Messenger took prime responsibility for her burial. A darkened sky of mourning gripped the family of the Messenger. His beloved companion of 25 years, who had comforted him through so much hardship, was now gone. He was grief stricken. The Messenger could not bring himself to smile for months after Khadija's death.

One day the Messenger was praying to The Majestic at the Sanctuary. Abu Jahl and his friends were sitting around.

"Who amongst you," Abu Jahl asked, "will go to the carcass of that camel, bring the intestines, and throw it on the back of the Praiseworthy when he is praying to his Lord?"

The worst of them walked to the dead animal, stuck his hand in the decomposing body, and pulled out the bloody, stinking guts. His hatred for the faith was even more than any disgust he had for what he was holding. Abu Jahl's friend snuck up behind the Messenger, waited for him to go into prostration at the Sanctuary, and then dumped the heavy camel intestines onto the Messenger's back! The Messenger remained in prostration, the filth weighing him down.

Slowly people gathered around the spectacle, jeering at the Messenger, falling onto their sides and thrashing around with amusement. The Messenger's young daughter, Fatimah, was tipped off that her father needed her help. Tears streaming down her face, she ran and exerted herself to lift the camel intestines off his back.

The Messenger finished praying, stood up straight, comforting his daughter, and then faced Abu Jahl and his friends. When he raised his finger up to the sky, the hooligans became silent. The Messenger supplicated to The Majestic against Abu Jahl and each of his friends by name thrice. When he finished, the faces of the gang had gone pale.^{44,45}

After losing both his external political protection and precious internal support, the Messenger decided to see if there was any receptivity for his message in Taif, a lush, green town just 68 miles away. The Messenger left in secret and traveled by foot for two days with his adopted son, Zayd. After climbing some rough terrain, they eventually arrived at Taif, cradled among a series of mountain ranges.

He approached the leaders of the dominant tribe there called Thaqif. The chieftains were three brothers who shared power, and they worshiped stone idols and statues. The Messenger requested to meet with them. When the time came, he described the faith and called them to believe in The Majestic. Sneering, the leaders of Taif knew in advance what the Messenger had been teaching in the City. Drawing up the most sarcastic, rude, and harsh insults in their arsenal, the leaders of Taif rejected the Messenger, mocking and dismissing him.

The Messenger stayed in Taif for less than a week, peacefully calling the people in the marketplace to submit to The Majestic and embrace the message. When somebody showed receptivity to the call, the leaders of Taif instructed a mob to chase the Messenger away and stone him. The Messenger and Zayd ran for safety. Zayd flung his own body in front of the Messenger as the stones came flying at them, like bullets. Zayd could not deflect all of the stones and pellets and both men fled the city, injured and bloodied.

The Messenger and Zayd walked several miles away from Taif. In a state of shock, the Messenger felt grief and sadness. This was the most difficult day of his life. All of the tragedies and hardships that he faced only served to soften his heart and draw him closer to The Majestic.

He sought a moment's rest under the shade of a tree on the corner of a small orchard and called out to The Majestic,

"I complain to You my lack of strength, lack of support, and the humiliation I am made to receive.

"And how insignificant I am to other people.

"Oh most Merciful of those who have no power! To whom do You leave me? To some distant person who will be like the fire for me? Or to some enemy that You give him power over me?"

"If You have no anger toward me, I have no objection. I would, however, be much happier with Your mercy.

"I seek refuge in the light of Your countenance that by it even all of the darkness becomes illuminated and all of this world and the next world is taken care of. I seek refuge from Your wrath descending upon me or your anger descending upon me.

"You can censure and for You is the reproach until You are content.

"And there is no strength and no power except from You." 46

The owners of the orchard saw the Messenger in such an unfortunate, bloodied state, and felt pity. They ordered their Christian servant to take a plate of grapes to him.

The servant offered, "This is a gift."

The Messenger accepted the grapes, and before eating them he invoked The Majestic's name as was the practice in his faith.

The servant was surprised to hear this and said, "This is something no one in this area says."

The Messenger asked about the servant's faith and homeland, to which the servant answered.

The Messenger responded, "Then you come from the same place as the noble Jonah."

The servant exclaimed, "How did you know about Jonah?"

The Messenger said, "Just as I am a messenger, Jonah was a messenger. And all of The Majestic's messengers are brothers."

The servant kissed the Messenger's head, hands, and feet. He believed in him and submitted to the faith, a silver lining to the Messenger's dreadful day.

The servant returned to the owners of the orchard, who asked, "Why were you kissing his hands and feet?"

"There is no one on earth who is better than he is," he said, "for he told me things that only a messenger could know."

The owners grimaced, "He has bewitched you from your religion. Your religion is better..." 47

The Messenger raised his head to the sky and saw a cloud which had cast its shadow on him.

There above him was Angel Gabriel, who called out, "The Majestic, The Honored and Glorious One, has heard what your people have said to you, and how they have reacted to your call. And He has sent to you the angel in charge of the mountains so that you may order him what you wish with regard to them."

The angel in charge of the mountains called out to the Messenger, greeted him, and said "Oh Messenger, The Majestic has listened to what your people have said to you. I am the angel in charge of the mountains. And Your Master has sent me to you so that you may order me what you wish. If you wish that I should bring together the two mountains that stand opposite to each other at the extremities to crush them in between, I would do that."

But the Messenger said to him, "I rather hope that The Majestic will produce from their descendants such persons as will worship The Majestic, the One, and will not ascribe partners to Him." 48

Despite all of the abuse he endured, the Messenger declined to take revenge and instead showed such an unparalleled level of mercy and compassion.

On the way back to the City, the Messenger camped in a desert grove. Although he was traveling and his wounds had still not healed from the incident at Taif, the Messenger prayed and prostrated to The Majestic during the last third of the cold night. Jinn – creatures from the unseen realm made from smokeless fire – crossed paths with the Messenger. They gathered around him in a dense crowd, listening to the Messenger recite from the Book.

The Jewish jinn said amongst themselves, "Listen in silence!"

"Oh most Merciful of those who have no power! To whom do You leave me? To some distant person who will be like the fire for me? Or to some enemy that You give him power over me?"

"If You have no anger toward me, I have no objection. I would, however, be much happier with Your mercy.

"I seek refuge in the light of Your countenance that by it even all of the darkness becomes illuminated and all of this world and the next world is taken care of. I seek refuge from Your wrath descending upon me or your anger descending upon me.

"You can censure and for You is the reproach until You are content.

"And there is no strength and no power except from You."⁴⁶

The owners of the orchard saw the Messenger in such an unfortunate, bloodied state, and felt pity. They ordered their Christian servant to take a plate of grapes to him.

The servant offered, "This is a gift."

The Messenger accepted the grapes, and before eating them he invoked The Majestic's name as was the practice in his faith.

The servant was surprised to hear this and said, "This is something no one in this area says."

The Messenger asked about the servant's faith and homeland, to which the servant answered.

The Messenger responded, "Then you come from the same place as the noble Jonah."

The servant exclaimed, "How did you know about Jonah?"

The Messenger said, "Just as I am a messenger, Jonah was a messenger. And all of The Majestic's messengers are brothers."

The servant kissed the Messenger's head, hands, and feet. He believed in him and submitted to the faith, a silver lining to the Messenger's dreadful day.

The servant returned to the owners of the orchard, who asked, "Why were you kissing his hands and feet?"

"There is no one on earth who is better than he is," he said, "for he told me things that only a messenger could know."

The owners grimaced, "He has bewitched you from your religion. Your religion is better..."⁴⁷

The Messenger raised his head to the sky and saw a cloud which had cast its shadow on him.

There above him was Angel Gabriel, who called out, "The Majestic, The Honored and Glorious One, has heard what your people have said to you, and how they have reacted to your call. And He has sent to you the angel in charge of the mountains so that you may order him what you wish with regard to them."

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The Jewish jinn said amongst themselves, "Listen in silence!"

When the Messenger had finished praying, they returned to their people and warned them.

These jinn said, "O our people! Verily! We have heard a Book sent down after Moses, confirming what came before it, it guides to the truth and to a Straight Path. O our people! Respond to The Majestic's Caller, and believe in him..."⁴⁹

Many jinn in their community embraced the message. Later on, one of their callers sought out the Messenger in the City and wanted to learn more about the faith. The Messenger obliged and recited the Book to those jinn. Even if the majority of people in the City and Taif rejected the Messenger, creatures from the unseen realm had sincerely responded to his call. The oppressors of the land would not be able to smother the truth forever.⁵⁰

The Messenger and Zayd had drawn close enough to the City but could not prudently enter without coming under the protection of some type of ally. Thus, the Messenger sent emissaries to several people who he thought might be sympathetic to his situation. While the first two people who received the request cowered away, al-Mutim showed courage and extended protection to the Messenger. Although he was not a follower, he instructed his four sons to wear their armor and weapons and go out to escort the Messenger from the outskirts to the Sanctuary. When the four sons had successfully guarded the traveler, al-Mutim encouraged the Messenger to circle the Sanctuary structure seven times as was the custom. As the Messenger circled, al-Mutim's armed sons were alongside him. The people looked on in curiosity and wonder.

To the extent that a believer and nonbeliever can respectfully work together to uphold basic rights and justice, they can and should ally and work together.

"Oh people..." Al-Mutim proclaimed before the City, "I have given my protection to the Praiseworthy."

15. Night Journey and the Incredible Ascent

The Messenger had returned to the City and was sleeping in his home close to the Sanctuary. He was roused by Angel Gabriel, who took him by the arm and led him just outside of the Sanctuary. There, Angel Gabriel split open the Messenger's chest, and his heart was washed with the water of Zam Zam in a vessel of gold. From his heart was removed all of the despair, difficulties, and grief that he had experienced. His heart was filled with wisdom, faith, forbearance, knowledge, certainty, and peace. Angel Gabriel then placed the Messenger's heart back in his chest, and it was sealed, just as had occurred once before in his childhood.

The Messenger's friends would be able to see traces of the scar that went down his chest, left from the two times Angel Gabriel opened his chest to purify his heart.⁵¹

Miraculously recovered from his open-heart surgery, the Messenger saw standing nearby a white animal from the unseen realm, like nothing he had ever seen before. Its size was between that of a mule and a donkey. Every stride the creature took was the distance as far as the eye could see. Its name was Buraq.⁵²

The Messenger was told to mount the animal, but the creature moved in an agitated manner.

“Are you not ashamed?” Angel Gabriel admonished Buraq, “Nobody has ever ridden you more blessed than your current rider.”

The Messenger mounted Buraq, and it flew through the night’s sky. They descended to a desert land of red sand, and made a prayer.

Angel Gabriel asked, “Do you know where you prayed? You prayed where Moses spoke to The Majestic.”

Buraq then flew with the Messenger to a land of date palms and trickling rivers. There, the Messenger offered another prayer.

“Do you know where you prayed?” Angel Gabriel again asked, “You prayed in Bethlehem, where Jesus, son of Mary was born.”

The Messenger arrived at the Al-Aqsa Sanctuary in Jerusalem and saw all the messengers praying and gathering from every generation aforesaid, including Jesus, Moses, Abraham, Noah, and many more of the honored. The Messenger stood at the front of where they were all gathered and led them all in prayer.

After it had concluded, Abraham said, “Praise be the One who made me His friend and gave me great dominion. He made me alone a community that I was obedient to The Majestic. I was taken as an example, and He freed me from the fire, and He made the fire cool and safe for me.”

Moses took his turn next, and said, “Praise by the One who spoke to me and destroyed Pharaoh at my hands, and the tribe of Israel was saved at my hands, and He made some of my believers a community that was righteous and guided to the truth.”

David thanked The Majestic for giving him the ability to transform iron, subjugation of the mountains, being able to hear the birds praise The Majestic, wisdom, and the ability to speak.

The Messenger met Solomon who praised The Majestic for giving him the miracle of being able to subjugate the winds and command the jinn.

The Messenger met Jesus. Jesus praised The Majestic for making the likeness of him like Adam, who was created from dust, and taught him the book, the wisdom, the Torah, and the Gospel. He glorified The Majestic for giving him the ability to heal the sick and those suffering from leprosy and the ability to bring the dead to life with the power of The Majestic. He raised him up, purified him, preserved him and his mother from the accursed Satan, and He did not give Satan inroad into him.

“All of you have praised The Majestic,” the Messenger said once each messenger had had his turn, “and now I will praise Him! Praise be to the One who sent me as a mercy to all the worlds and for all of humanity as a warner and a bearer of glad tidings and who had revealed to me the Book. In it is a clarification of everything. And He made my community the best that has come out for people. And He made my community the first and the last...And He removed the weightiness from me. And He raised up my remembrance. And He made me the opener and the sealer.”

Then the Messengers spoke of the Last Hour on Earth – the Day of Judgment.

After the prayer, the Messenger was offered a choice of two drinks – one of milk or one of wine.

The Messenger looked to Angel Gabriel, who gestured to the glass filled with cream, white and pure.

“Take the milk,” suggested Angel Gabriel.

Once the Messenger had drunk his fill of the milk, Angel Gabriel said, “You chose the straight religion. Had you chosen the wine, your community would have gone astray and only a few of them would have followed you.”

Higher and higher, beyond the realms of this universe, outside the confines of time and space, Angel Gabriel traveled with the Messenger into the unseen realm.

The gatekeepers of Heaven barred their entry at each level, demanding, "Who is there?"

"Gabriel," he replied.

The gatekeepers asked, "And who is with you?"

"The Last Messenger," Angel Gabriel beamed.

The gatekeepers inquired, curious, "And has he been sent for?"

Angel Gabriel affirmed, "Yes."

"He is welcomed," the gatekeepers radiated, throwing open the gates. "What a wonderful visit his is!"

The Messenger entered the first level of Heaven, full of light and delights like which our imagination cannot comprehend. There, he saw a very tall man.

"This is your father," Angel Gabriel introduced, "Adam. Greet him."

The Messenger said, "May peace be upon you."

"Welcome," Adam responded, "oh noble son and noble Messenger."⁵³

The Messenger then ascended to the higher and higher levels of Heaven, Angel Gabriel leading the way through such bounty and beauty! A person would surely want to gape, amazed, for an eternity.

At each level of Heaven, the gatekeepers and Angel Gabriel exchanged the same dialogue before entry was granted.

In the second level of Heaven, The Messenger met John and Jesus.

Climbing up to the third level of Heaven, Gabriel introduced him to Joseph.

The Messenger observed, "Lo and behold, it was as though he had been given half of all beauty."

The Messenger then ascended to the fourth level of Heaven with Angel Gabriel, where he saw Enoch.

With respect to Enoch, The Majestic said, "And We have raised him to a lofty place."⁵⁴

In the fifth level, Aaron greeted the Messenger.

In the sixth, there was Moses, strong and tall. He welcomed the Messenger. Moses began to weep, and he was asked why he was crying.

"This young man," Moses explained away his tears, "who was sent after me, shall have a larger following that will enter Paradise than my own believers."

The Messenger and Angel Gabriel ascended to the seventh level of Heaven, where they found Abraham, resting his back on al-Bayt al-Mamur, the heavenly Sanctuary which stands grandly and through which 70,000 angels enter every day to pray and never return there again!

Angel Gabriel said, "This is your father, Abraham. Greet him."

The Messenger said, "May peace be upon you."

Abraham responded, "Welcome, oh noble son and noble Messenger."

In the seventh Heaven, the Messenger continued until he reached the Lote Tree of the farthest limit. Its fruits hung strikingly like clay jugs, and its leaves were like the ears of elephants. The Lote Tree was enchanting, its colors ever changing to hues and tints that the human eye had never before witnessed on Earth. Golden butterflies were fluttering all around it.⁵⁵

Upon seeing this magnificent Tree, the Messenger exclaimed, "I have never seen anything more extraordinary."

Four rivers originated from the Lote Tree's roots, two of them were apparent and two of them were hidden. The Messenger asked Angel Gabriel about the rivers.

"The two hidden rivers are in Paradise, and the apparent ones are the Nile and the Euphrates," said Angel Gabriel, who had appeared

in his glorious, original form with six hundred feathered wings and pearls emanating from his presence.

Nobody in Heaven – not even the angels – was permitted to go past the Lote Tree. However, the Messenger was raised up alone to a level where he could hear a pen writing in a book, which was recording everything that happens until the end of time.

In this highest level of Heaven, The Majestic was present. The Messenger was as close to The Majestic as the length of two bows, separated from The Majestic by a veil of pure light. The Messenger could not see Him though.⁵⁶

The Majestic bestowed a precious gift to the Messenger that 50 prayers were now obligatory upon the Messenger and his community every day and night.

Descending to the sixth level of Heaven, the Messenger reached Moses.

“What has The Majestic made obligatory upon your community?” Moses inquired with curiosity.

“50 prayers,” the Messenger confided, “each day and night.”

Moses advised, “Return to The Majestic. Ask for concessions for your community. For verily your people cannot fulfill that. My community could not even fulfill its two prayers.”

The Messenger looked over to Angel Gabriel, wanting to get his opinion. Angel Gabriel nodded, indicating to act upon the suggestion from Moses.

The Messenger returned to The Majestic and besought, “O Majestic One! Please reduce the prayers for my community.”

Thus, five prayers were alleviated for the Messenger’s community, bringing the obligation to 45 prayers per day in total.

The Messenger again descended until he reached Moses.

“What happened?” Moses probed again.

The Messenger said, “Five prayers were reduced for my community.”

Moses repeated, “Return to The Majestic. Ask for concessions for your community. For verily your people cannot fulfill that.”

The Messenger continued to ferry between The Majestic and Moses, and five prayers were reduced each time until they had been reduced from the original fifty down to a gift of five prayers in total.

The Messenger descended to Moses and again told him what had happened.

Moses repeated, “Return to The Majestic. Ask for concessions for your community. For verily your people cannot fulfill that.”

“I have returned to The Majestic so many times,” the Messenger admitted, “that I am ashamed, but I am content and happy.”

Then The Majestic said, “The obligations have been established, and I have made things easier for my servants. It is five but it shall be rewarded with fifty.”

And thus it came to pass that five precious, daily prayers were made obligatory for the Messenger’s community.

In the vortex of the next life, where good and bad are measured and given their just repayment, the Messenger peered into the abodes of people. He saw people effortlessly farming and harvesting at the same time. Every time the people would cut the crops, they would grow back right away.

The Messenger gazed in awe, “Who are they?”

Angel Gabriel said, “These were people who fought for the sake of The Majestic.”

Angel Gabriel then took the Messenger to a different place and introduced him to the Angel Malik.

“This is Malik, the gatekeeper of Hell. Greet him,” said Angel Gabriel.

The Messenger turned to wish Angel Malik peace.

Before he could do so, Angel Malik said, “May peace be upon you.”

The Messenger responded, "And upon you be peace."

Angel Malik seemed quite sad.

The Messenger asked Angel Gabriel, "Why is he like this?"

"He has never smiled," Angel Gabriel explained, "or laughed since he has been created. Were he to have smiled for anybody, it would have been you."

Angel Gabriel then showed the Messenger a glimpse of Hell. There were people whose heads were being smashed and put back together, only to be smashed again, over and over.

The Messenger grimaced, "Who are those people, oh Gabriel?"

"Those," Gabriel said, "are people who never bothered to get up for the obligatory prayers."

Suddenly, the two were overtaken by a rotten smell and saw another people dressed in rags. They were devouring Zaqqum, a horrible thorny tree in Hell. Its disgusting fruit dangled, as tempting as the heads of devils made from fire.⁵⁷

The Messenger gasped, "Who are those people, oh Gabriel?"

"Those," Angel Gabriel described, "are the people who never used to give charity from their wealth and The Majestic did not oppress them one iota."

Overcome by a strange combination of aromas, the Messenger turned toward a people who had both meat that was cooked and meat that was raw and foul. They turned their backs to the fresh roasts and ate the rotten meat.

The Messenger inquired, "Who are these people?"

"This is a man from your community," Angel Gabriel explained, "who had a wife that was...pure, but he would go to a foul woman and sleep with her until the morning, or a woman who would do the same."

The Messenger saw a man who was swimming in a river of blood and he was being smashed with stone.

The Messenger asked, concerned, "Who are these people?"

"These are people," Angel Gabriel said, "who consumed interest."

He described people who take interest on debt or assets.

Passing by, the Messenger saw a man who was gathering wood, but could not carry it. Every time he would try, the wood would increase.

The Messenger inquired, "Who is this, oh Gabriel?"

"This is a man from your community," Angel Gabriel said, "who used to have trusts from people and he was not able to fulfill them, although he wanted to."

Then a ghastly sight came upon the Messenger: a people whose tongues and lips were being sheared off with scissors of iron, and every time they would be painfully cut off, their tongues would be whole again.

The Messenger asked, "Who are these people, oh Gabriel?"

Angel Gabriel said, "They are those who gave sermons, saying what they did not do."

The sound of scratching drew the Messenger's attention to a people who were constantly scraping their faces and breasts with copper nails.

The Messenger asked, "Who are these people, oh Gabriel?"

"These are the ones," Angel Gabriel said, "who were backbiting about people."

He described people who spoke poorly of others behind their backs.

The Messenger came to a valley where there was a cool breeze and the scent of musk. He heard a beautiful, alluring voice.

"Oh Gabriel," the Messenger asked, "what is this?"

Angel Gabriel said, "This is the voice of Paradise."

The lovely voice said, "Oh Majestic One, bring me those who you have promised me, because how expansive is my silk, and my

ornaments, and my pearls, and all of my silver and gold, and the cups that I have, and all of the plates that I have, and all of the rivers of water, honey, and milk..."

The Majestic replied to the voice of Paradise, "For you is every believing man and believing woman, and whoever believes in Me and My messengers...and do not make partners with Me, and those who have fear of Me, they will be safe.

"And whoever asks Me, I will reward him. And whoever trusts Me, I will be enough for him.

"I am The Majestic; there is no Master but Me.

"And I fulfill My promises. And the believers have had success. And The Majestic is the best of creators."⁵⁸

The voice of Paradise responded, "I am pleased."

The Messenger came to another valley, ringing with an evil sound and rising from it a foul smell.

The Messenger asked, "What is this?"

"This is the voice of Hell," Angel Gabriel said.

The voice of Hell boomed, "Oh Majestic One, bring me what you promised me because my chains are so many, and my restraints...and how deep is my pit and how fierce is my fire...so bring me the people you have promised me."

The Majestic replied to the voice of Hell, "You have every disbeliever, foul person, tyrant, and everyone that does not believe in the Last Day."

Then the Messenger saw the Dajjal, or the "Antichrist."

"Oh Messenger," Angel Gabriel asked, "how did you see him?"

The Messenger said, "I saw him like a large man, and he was extremely white. One of his eyes was protruding out as if it were a shiny planet. His hair was like the branches of a tree."

Then a white pillar, as though it were made of solid pearl, was carried on the backs of angels.

"What are you carrying?" the Messenger asked them.

"We are carrying the pillar of the final, chosen religion," the angels responded, "and we were commanded to place it in the area encompassing Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine."

The Messenger was beckoned by an old, decrepit man. The Messenger did not answer his call.

"Do not answer him," Angel Gabriel warned.

The Messenger asked, "Who was that, oh Gabriel?"

"That was the enemy of The Majestic—" Angel Gabriel exposed, "Satan, and he wanted you to incline toward him."

On the side of the road, the Messenger then came across an old woman. She called the Messenger, but he did not look at her.

The Messenger asked, "Who was this, oh Gabriel?"

"That woman," Angel Gabriel explained, "is what remains of the life of the earthly world."

After ultimately returning to Jerusalem, the Messenger sat on Buraq and flew to the City. His bed was still warm upon his return. Through the whirlwind night, time had virtually stood still when he stepped out of this realm for his miraculous journey.

Eager to share his phenomenal experience with the people of the City, he first confided in his cousin. Staggered, his cousin discouraged him from doing so lest he be mocked.

"By The Majestic," the Messenger insisted, "I am going to tell them."

The Messenger went to the Sanctuary and sat in a state of worry. He was also concerned that when he shared his experience, the people would not believe him. Abu Jahl passed by the Messenger and noticed his demeanor.

"What is the matter with you?" Abu Jahl asked sarcastically. "Has anything happened?"

"Yes," the Messenger responded, "something happened."

Abu Jahl asked curiously, "What happened?"

"Last night," began the Messenger. "I was taken from here to Jerusalem,"

Abu Jahl retorted, "And you are now waking up amongst us?"

The Messenger said, "Yes, I am waking up amongst you here."

Convinced that he could finally turn the tide against the Messenger, Abu Jahl asked, "If I call your people, will you tell them what you just told me?"

"Yes, I will," the Messenger answered.

Abu Jahl called out loudly to the Quraysh, "Come forth! We have an announcement to make!"

The people responded to the call and gathered around the Messenger, who was sitting, and Abu Jahl, who was standing.

Abu Jahl signaled to the Messenger, "Tell them what you promised you would tell them!"

The Messenger shared, "Last night, I went to Jerusalem, and I went to pray at the Al-Aqsa Sanctuary."

Some of the people were overjoyed while others doubted him. A man from the crowd who had been to Jerusalem challenged the Messenger to describe it for them, if what he was saying was true.

The Messenger began to describe Jerusalem until the people asked him for very specific details that he was not able to recall. After all, he had only been there for part of one night.

While the Messenger paused, trying to determine how to respond to this test, an image of Jerusalem miraculously rose up at a distance in front of him. There was not a question that the people posed that the Messenger could not answer easily with this aid. The Quraysh could not see the image of Jerusalem.⁵⁹

Someone from the crowd acknowledged, "As for the descriptions of Jerusalem, they are accurate."

The Messenger added, "I will give you some signs as well."

He described three returning caravans he had happened to see on his night journey and what condition they were in – one would be

coming back the soonest because it was closest to the City, the second caravan had lost a camel, and the third one had an urn of water.

"If this is the case," Abu Jahl snorted, "the caravan should be coming right now."

As they discussed the Messenger's night journey in front of the Sanctuary, news came that the first caravan had in fact entered the City, just as he had described.^{60,61}

16. Planting a Seed

The City sat in the middle of a peninsula strewn with tribes, all offshoots and branches of each other. At the root of the peninsula's tribes was Abraham, the forefather, and the Quraysh proudly inherited his son, Ishmael's legacy by hosting groups every year for pilgrimage. An expert in the tribes' genealogy was the Messenger's best friend, Abu Bakr, who would accompany him during the annual pilgrimage season to approach the different clans and call them to the faith. A time came where they not only called them to the faith, but also sought political asylum for the Messenger. The City was slowly suffocating the believers, and while the Messenger spoke to many tribes, not one granted his request or could comprehend leaving idolatry.

North of the City, a town called Yathrib was recovering from a civil war that had consumed the two dominant tribes there for over a decade. Disillusioned by the idols that failed to keep peace and exhausted by bloodshed that killed almost all of their senior leaders on both sides, a group of six pilgrims came to the City thirsting for a new

vision and purpose. The Messenger's call to The Majestic enthralled them.

The pilgrims of Yathrib were familiar with elements of the message, having interacted with their Jewish neighbors in Yathrib. The three Jewish tribes there read from scriptures, had schools, and built fortresses with sophisticated architecture. Fleeing conflicts with the Romans, the Jews settled in Yathrib after the second destruction of Solomon's temple as well as after Roman Emperor Hadrian brutally persecuted, murdered, and expelled Jews from Jerusalem. The Jews of Yathrib spoke with great pride of their developed civilization, making the war-torn pilgrims from Yathrib feel inferior. The Jews were actually waiting for a messenger to come from their lineage. When he emerged from the kin of Ishmael, rather than Isaac, in the City, most in the Jewish community rejected him.

Thus, when the Messenger approached the six pilgrims from Yathrib performing the pilgrimage near the City, the truth of the message took root and faith began to blossom in their hearts. Returning home, they sowed seeds of the faith in Yathrib. The pilgrims of Yathrib returned to the City a year later with double the number of believers.⁶²

Upon traveling to the plains just outside the City, the dozen pilgrims met with the Messenger. The individuals in the group were from different sub-tribes, many of which were once pitted against each other in war. For the first time they stood side by side, united under the banner of a common faith rooted in their hearts, running deeper than blood.

In front of the Messenger, they each took an oath swearing, "Our allegiance to worship The Majestic alone. We are not going to fornicate. We are not going to steal. We are not going to kill our children. We will not live immoral and unrighteous lives. We will obey the Messenger in all good matters."⁶³

The pilgrims from Yathrib requested the Messenger to send a practiced believer back with them to teach them the faith, the Book, and how to pray. Musab, a young, noble, handsome man, was chosen by the Messenger to be his ambassador in Yathrib. Immediately befriending the people of Yathrib, Musab fanned the embers of faith,

inspiring believers with the oneness of The Majestic. Soon enough there were 40 believers in Yathrib, and the Messenger sent word to establish the weekly Friday service. For the first time, Musab gave the reflective talk followed by a congregational prayer in a spacious house shaded by a date palm grove.

Despite facing some initial hesitation, Musab calmly and confidently convinced two of the young leaders – one a tall, handsome, broad man named Saad ibn Muadh – to embrace the faith. Emulating the men in power, Saad's sub-tribe leaned into the faith and fell in love with the message.

One year later, Musab and a group of 75 pilgrims from Yathrib traveled to the City.

Yearning to see the Messenger and take him home with them, the pilgrims asked, "For how long will we allow the Messenger to be repelled from one valley to another outside of the City and to fear for his life?"

They extended an invitation to the Messenger to come live amongst them and be their leader. The Messenger first agreed, for the time being, to meet the pilgrims in a valley during the last third of the night, at the end of the big pilgrimage when everyone else would be exhausted and sleeping. The pilgrims quietly slipped out of the campground and arrived at the agreed upon location first. It was dark, with only a sliver of moonlight to see. Eventually the Messenger arrived along with his uncle, Al-'Abbas, who had not accepted the faith and yet accompanied his nephew out of a sense of tribal loyalty. They were both of similar age and had a strong friendship despite their differences. Abu Bakr and Ali kept watch while the Messenger met with the devoted pilgrims of Yathrib.

Al-'Abbas was a handsome merchant and had traveled to Yathrib on business before. As he looked around at the believing pilgrims who were present, he did not recognize anyone there. The former leadership, whom he knew well from trade, had all been decimated in the civil war. He was nervous and worried for the Messenger.

Al-'Abbas addressed the pilgrims with his characteristically loud voice cutting through the darkness, "You know the status of this man amongst us. We have protected him from his own people, even though we agree with our people. He has respect and honor amongst us. He has protection, but he has decided to leave us to go over to you. If you are sure that you can live up to your conditions with him and protect him from those who disagree, then you shall bear his responsibility. Otherwise let him be and realize that he is honored amongst his people."⁶⁴

Al-'Abbas was embarrassed at the situation. Clearly the Quraysh had not treated the Messenger well, giving the Messenger excellent reason to emigrate. Al-'Abbas was left scouring for any remaining honor he could use to save face.

"Al-'Abbas, you have spoken," the pilgrims said to the two men, drizzled in moonlight. "Now let the Messenger speak... Oh Messenger, put the conditions that you want."

The Messenger stood up to speak. He recited from the Book.

He then began, "I will allow you to give the allegiance in return for protection... like one of your own."

A pilgrim responded directly, "We are a people experienced in the arts of war. We have inherited it from our forefathers. This is an easy condition."

Another pilgrim known for his generosity spoke up, "Oh Messenger, we have ties with the Jews. By accepting you, those treaties will be broken, and we know it. Once you come over to our side and then The Majestic gives us victory, will you then leave us and go back to your people?"

"No," the Messenger smiled and reassured them, "my blood is your blood. My destruction is your destruction."

The pilgrims were pleased, basking in the radiant smile of the Messenger and the comparatively dull twinkling of the stars. They asked the Messenger to elaborate on what type of oath they should make.

The Messenger resumed, "You must give the oath of allegiance that you hear and you obey in ease and in difficulty, that you spend of

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Despite facing some initial hesitation, Musab calmly and confidently convinced two of the young leaders – one a tall, handsome, broad man named Saad ibn Muadh – to embrace the faith. Emulating the men in power, Saad's sub-tribe leaned into the faith and fell in love with the message.

One year later, Musab and a group of 75 pilgrims from Yathrib traveled to the City.

Yearning to see the Messenger and take him home with them, the pilgrims asked, "For how long will we allow the Messenger to be repelled from one valley to another outside of the City and to fear for his life?"

They extended an invitation to the Messenger to come live amongst them and be their leader. The Messenger first agreed, for the time being, to meet the pilgrims in a valley during the last third of the night, at the end of the big pilgrimage when everyone else would be exhausted and sleeping. The pilgrims quietly slipped out of the campground and arrived at the agreed upon location first. It was dark, with only a sliver of moonlight to see. Eventually the Messenger arrived along with his uncle, Al-'Abbas, who had not accepted the faith and yet accompanied his nephew out of a sense of tribal loyalty. They were both of similar age and had a strong friendship despite their differences. Abu Bakr and Ali kept watch while the Messenger met with the devoted pilgrims of Yathrib.

Al-'Abbas was a handsome merchant and had traveled to Yathrib on business before. As he looked around at the believing pilgrims who were present, he did not recognize anyone there. The former leadership, whom he knew well from trade, had all been decimated in the civil war. He was nervous and worried for the Messenger.

Al-'Abbas addressed the pilgrims with his characteristically loud voice cutting through the darkness, "You know the status of this man amongst us. We have protected him from his own people, even though we agree with our people. He has respect and honor amongst us. He has protection, but he has decided to leave us to go over to you. If you are sure that you can live up to your conditions with him and protect him from those who disagree, then you shall bear his responsibility. Otherwise let him be and realize that he is honored amongst his people."⁶⁴

Al-'Abbas was embarrassed at the situation. Clearly the Quraysh had not treated the Messenger well, giving the Messenger excellent reason to emigrate. Al-'Abbas was left scouring for any remaining honor he could use to save face.

"Al-'Abbas, you have spoken," the pilgrims said to the two men, drizzled in moonlight. "Now let the Messenger speak...Oh Messenger, put the conditions that you want."

The Messenger stood up to speak. He recited from the Book.

He then began, "I will allow you to give the allegiance in return for protection...like one of your own.

A pilgrim responded directly, "We are a people experienced in the arts of war. We have inherited it from our forefathers. This is an easy condition."

Another pilgrim known for his generosity spoke up, "Oh Messenger, we have ties with the Jews. By accepting you, those treaties will be broken, and we know it. Once you come over to our side and then The Majestic gives us victory, will you then leave us and go back to your people?"

"No," the Messenger smiled and reassured them, "my blood is your blood. My destruction is your destruction."

The pilgrims were pleased, basking in the radiant smile of the Messenger and the comparatively dull twinkling of the stars. They asked the Messenger to elaborate on what type of oath they should make.

The Messenger resumed, "You must give the oath of allegiance that you hear and you obey in ease and in difficulty, that you spend of

your money in the way of The Majestic, that you command the good and forbid the evil, that you speak the truth no matter what the consequences, and that you help me once I come to Yathrib just like you help your own family and your own wives and children."

After he had outlined the political oath and the two parties stood deliberating in the darkness, one pilgrim spoke out, "What shall we get in return?"

"Paradise," the Messenger put, simply.

The believing pilgrims of Yathrib came forward, intending to embrace the Messenger's hand and make the weighty oath.

Abruptly, Musab's host seized the Messenger's outstretched hand, holding it down and saying, "Wait! Oh people of Yathrib, we have not traveled all of this distance and undertaken this long journey except that we know that this man is the Messenger of The Majestic.

"Once his people expel him, then you will be asking for war. If you are ready that your necks meet swords, then go and give him the oath of allegiance and realize that the best of you will be killed, and fathers will lose their sons, and sons will lose their fathers, and you will cause death amongst yourselves by accepting him.

"If you are prepared to do this, then give him the oath. If not, then stop now; per chance The Majestic will forgive you because you did not give the oath."⁶⁵

The pilgrims had clearly heard Musab's host. Reaching out their hands, each man eagerly came forward and embraced the Messenger's hand to give the oath. The women who were present gave their allegiance verbally. As each pilgrim walked over to him, the Messenger promised Paradise in return as long as the conditions were met.

As the oaths were being made, a jinn of that valley felt so desperate that he broke his silence and cried out, "Oh people sleeping in the tents, do you not know that a group of rebels, a group of blameworthy people, have gathered together with a monotheist to wage war against you?"⁶⁶

The meeting concluded shortly thereafter and the pilgrims from Yathrib returned to their tents quietly.

The next morning a Qurayshi delegation visited each camp asking if anyone knew of a meeting that took place with the Messenger. When the believing pilgrims from Yathrib were questioned, they stayed silent. Instead, the pagans amongst them spoke up in denial, resolving the matter.

The pilgrims of Yathrib returned home, thrilled at the eminent emigration of the Messenger.

17. Assassination Conspiracy

There was a land of green date palm trees swaying in a warm breeze, the ripe fruit hanging heavy against dry fronds. The location was between two volcanic planes. This was to be home one day. The Messenger awoke from a dream and knew he would leave the City. He shared what he saw with his friends.

Most believers had already emigrated away from the City because of the hostile conditions there. Many of them would slip out of the City in the middle of the night and make the journey quietly and unannounced. There were few exceptions to this. Umar was one of the only courageous believers who did so publically.⁶⁷

After packing some of his belongings, Umar armed himself with his weapons and shield. He went to the Sanctuary and counter circumscribed it seven times.

"I am emigrating," declared Umar, stepping up to the leaders of the Quraysh.

He challenged them, "He who wants to leave behind him a bereaved mother, a widow, or orphan children can meet me beyond this valley."⁶⁸

None of the Quraysh hindered Umar from leaving, nor did they meet him beyond the valley given his superb skills as a warrior. The Quraysh remained safe in their City, frustrated at having to reject Umar's challenge and secretly relieved to have him out of their hair...for now.

The Messenger walked toward Abu Bakr's house at noon when the heat was most intense. Abu Bakr's family saw a figure emerge from a distance with a cloth wrapped around his head to protect himself against sunrays. They realized the Messenger must have come for something very important, because at this time many in the City took a nap to escape the scorching heat.

He asked Abu Bakr for permission to enter the house, then politely requested, "Remove everybody from the room."

"Oh Messenger," Abu Bakr responded, taken aback, "they are but your family."

The Messenger then said, "The Majestic has given me permission to emigrate."

Abu Bakr responded excitedly, "I beg you, by my mother and father, did The Majestic allow me to be the companion?"

"Yes," the Messenger smiled, "the permission has been given for you to accompany me."

With his daughters, Asma and Aishah, present in the house, Abu Bakr cried in happiness that the time had finally come to travel to Yathrib. He had already begun preparing for the inevitable emigration. He had purchased two camels and was feeding them a special diet for the journey. He gave them salt so that they could drink more water, and each one developed a hump.

Abu Bakr pulled himself together and said, "I have prepared two camels. One of them is yours."

The Messenger said, "Only if I pay you the price of the camel until it becomes mine."⁶⁹

He did not want to impose on his friend and also desired the full reward of his emigration. Nonetheless, Abu Bakr took all the wealth he had left after the many years of financial struggle endured in the City so that he could spend for the sake of The Majestic and the Messenger on the trip.

The Quraysh were already fearful that if the Messenger were to emigrate to Yathrib, he would gain more support, become politically stronger, and pose an even bigger threat to their status quo. They held a private meeting in the night to decide how to deal with the situation. Representatives from all of the sub-tribes were invited, except for Al-Mutim and Abu Lahab. The former had extended protection to the Messenger and the latter was feared to potentially feel some type of tribal sympathy for his nephew.

Someone proposed that the Messenger be subjected to solitary confinement. The group rejected this idea on the grounds that it might rally the believers.

Another Qurayshi said, "Let us send him into exile. Once he is far away, he will cause us no more trouble. We, on the other hand, will be able to repair the damage he has caused in our ranks and restore our national unity."⁷⁰

This proposal was also turned down as they felt the Messenger may gain support with another tribe given his eloquence.

Abu Jahl spoke up with malice. He suggested to take a youth from each of the clans and arm them with swords. He thought the young men should then all stab the Messenger at the same time. The blood would then be on the hands of all the tribes, and the sub-tribe of the Messenger could not declare war, but would instead accept the blood money for its slain member.

"This is the best opinion," said an old man who had entered the gathering.

The men turned their heads toward the voice. Chilling as it was, they found comfort that someone other than they, at least, supported

Abu Jahl's sinister plan. Little did they know that the voice was that of Satan himself, disguised in the form of the elderly man. Without further ado, the Quraysh forgot the man, who also quietly vanished from the gathering, leaving behind only bloodlust in his wake.

The Quraysh decided to move forward with their conspiracy to assassinate the Messenger that very night after the meeting. They selected and prepared their young assassins.

Meanwhile, Angel Gabriel informed the Messenger about the Qurayshi plot and that he had to leave now.

Ali lay alone in bed. He had volunteered to take the Messenger's place in the house before the attempted Qurayshi assassination.

"Don't be afraid," the Messenger reassured his young cousin, Ali.

Ali was then instructed, the next day, to return money deposits that various people in the City had entrusted with the Messenger for safekeeping. It was ironic that while many people at the time did not trust the Messenger's faith, they did trust the Messenger with their gold and silver.

As the heaviness of the night alighted upon the City, the young assassins slinked into position and kept watch over the Messenger's house.

The Messenger cracked open his door, stepping toward the assassins' line of sight.

As he looked out into the inky black Monday night, the Messenger recited from the Book, "And We have put before them a barrier and behind them a barrier and covered them, so they do not see."⁷¹

Stepping out, the Messenger threw dust on the assassins' heads. The assassins were all asleep, unconscious of his easy escape.

Sometime later, the assassins woke up with dirt on their faces and encrusted on their eyes. Shaking off the remnants of sleep, they regrouped and forcefully entered the Messenger's house. Quickly

taking in the simplicity and peaceful stillness about the house, they all rushed to the bed of the Messenger, where the covers gently rose and fell with the deep breaths of a sleeping man.

The assassins said, "Here is the Messenger in his bed."

The assassins all assembled around the bed, some already drawing their swords. The closest to the head jerked off the cover and gasped.

There lay Ali, asleep in the Messenger's bed. Frustrated, they agreed not to complicate their failed mission with unnecessary blood on their hands. Instead of taking his life, they reported back to their elders that the Messenger was gone.

Meanwhile, the Messenger had bid his farewell to the Sanctuary. As he passed the last shops of the City, he turned around and gazed at his hometown.

The Messenger said, "You are the most blessed land on Earth and the most beloved to me, and were it not for the fact that my people have expelled me, I would never have left you."

This was just as Khadija's cousin, Waraqa, had foreshadowed so many years ago.

The Messenger and Abu Bakr rode on their two camels into the distance.

18. Journey to Madinah

The Quraysh sent out horsemen on a reconnaissance mission to track the two missing men. A huge ransom of 100 camels was set for the capture of the Messenger.

The Messenger and Abu Bakr journeyed South – in the opposite direction of Yathrib – to seek refuge in the cave of Mount Thawr. Upon arriving, Abu Bakr wanted to enter the cave first, to assess its safety for the Messenger.

Meanwhile, back in the City, Abu Bakr's strong, intelligent son listened to Qurayshi discussions and movements. He reported back to his father and the Messenger the latest developments, in addition to delivering food and drink. As an added precaution, Abu Bakr's servant herded a flock of sheep to cover the son's footsteps between the cave and City.

Some of the Qurayshi men, with an expert scout, managed to come just outside of the cave, and their voices could be heard by the Messenger and his friend, who were hiding within. Abu Bakr became

incredibly frightened for the Messenger's life, now with a bounty attached to it, dead or alive.

"If any one of them looks down," he whispered, "he is sure to see us!"⁷²

"Be not afraid," the Messenger reassured Abu Bakr in an unwavering voice. "Surely God is with us."⁷³

With threads like molten silver weaving and looping themselves into a dreamcatcher, the web began to drape itself over the entrance of Cave Thawr. A spider, inspired by the Majestic, quickly spun a web over the entrance of the cave in which the two men hid. Scanning the entrance and seeing cobwebs, the Quraysh's scouts assumed that there must not be anyone inside the cave nor had anyone entered it in some time.

After they spent three nights in the cave, Asma came from the City to give the Messenger and her father food for their long journey. She realized that she had not brought a rope to tie the food supply to the camel's saddle. Asma improvised and used her own belt instead, tearing one of her few possessions into cords and fastening the food to the two steeds. For this act of sacrifice, the Messenger fondly gave her the nickname, "the lady with two belts."

The Messenger and Abu Bakr set out again, with a travel guide, in the morning. They chose a path unfamiliar to most of the Quraysh, over 300-miles traveling to a seaport and then north to Yathrib.

Every step of the camel and every sand dune traversed took the Messenger and his friend further and further from the City they once called home.

The Majestic revealed to the Messenger, "Indeed, He who imposed upon you the Book will take you back to a place of return."⁷⁴

The Messenger rode on, ever grateful to the Majestic. He had been promised a future return to the City.

The Quraysh informed every tribe along the way to Yathrib about the big reward of 100 camels for the capture of the Messenger. News about the Messenger's mission also spread across the Peninsula.

While the Messenger, Abu Bakr, and their travel guide journeyed, they were spotted by a man. He rushed and reported their position to a particular tribe, which included an individual named Suraqah.

Eager to claim the ransom all to himself, Suraqah turned to his clansmen and lied, "I have seen those people myself. They belong to such and such tribe, and they are only chasing a camel which has gone astray."

Suraqah, a famed warrior and swift horseman, took up weapons and pursued the travelers. When he spotted the Messenger and Abu Bakr, Suraqah suddenly found himself thrown onto the sand below! His horse had inexplicably fallen down. The horse got up, and he rode on. At the moment when the travelers came into view once more, his horse fell down a second time. Again Suraqah picked himself up and rode on. The Messenger and Abu Bakr came into sight a third time.

Suddenly Suraqah felt his steed sinking. He frantically looked around and realized that his horse was caught in a patch of quicksand. It dawned upon him that he would not be able to gain the upper hand. Desperate, he shouted to the travelers and assured them that he would do no harm. They heard Suraqah and approached him. He asked the Messenger to write him a note of protection which would serve as a token to recognize him at a future time. Abu Bakr wrote it on his behalf. Suraqah took the note and started to head back home.⁷⁵

The Messenger called him to ask, "What would you say, Suraqah, if you were to wear the bracelets of the Emperor of Persia?"

Suraqah sputtered, "Khusru ibn Hormuz?"

Khusru ibn Hormuz was the famed Persian Emperor in power.

The Messenger said, "Yes."

Suraqah returned to his tribe and concealed the position of the Messenger and his friend for a time. He reassured them that the Messenger was not in the direction from whence he came. Remembering the dreadful feeling of his horse sinking into the sand and of what otherworldly protection the men had, Suraqah kept safe the note of protection.

As they journeyed on, Abu Bakr and the Messenger came upon an old woman whose husband had taken their flock of sheep out to graze. The Messenger and his friend greeted the woman.

The Messenger asked, "May we purchase any food from you?"

The woman apologized that she had nothing to offer.

The Messenger noticed that there was one old sheep that was left behind and was not producing milk. He requested permission to approach the lame sheep. With her consent, the Messenger passed his hand over the sheep's udder. He then invoked the name of The Majestic and put his hand on the sheep's udder, which filled with milk before their very eyes! Abu Bakr humbly milked the sheep. The two travelers drank until they were full, and left the astonished woman with a sheep full of milk.

When the woman's husband returned, he asked her what had happened. She described the Messenger as handsome, with long hair, and he was neither short nor tall.

When the wife related the recent events, the husband understood, "This must be the man that the Quraysh are opposing."

Following this encounter, the couple decided to embrace the faith. Even when the Messenger was fleeing for his life, a trail of peace and good followed in his wake.

Near the end of their journey, the Messenger and Abu Bakr stayed for a few days on the outskirts of Yathrib. Ali, Aishah, and Asma caught up and joined them. The Messenger and believers started building a place of prayer there.

One of the most well-known Jewish rabbis received the news and went to see the Messenger.

"Spread the greetings of peace," the Messenger advised. "Feed the people. Be good to your relatives. And pray at night when everybody is asleep. And if you do those things, you will enter Paradise with peace."

The Jewish rabbi knew that the message was true and embraced the new faith sincerely.

The Messenger and Abu Bakr traveled a few more miles until they reached a place where several of the believers visited, hoping that they would be the first to greet the honored travelers. The believers would remain in wait from morning until the heat became unbearable. Close by that day, a Jewish man had climbed a tree in his orchard to harvest dates before Noon, and he ended up being the first to spot the approaching Messenger and Abu Bakr.

The man exclaimed, "Your wealth has come!"

The Messenger, rich at heart, was carrying virtually nothing with him. The Jew gifted the Messenger and Abu Bakr two white robes, which they accepted and wore. They looked strikingly good even after their long emigration.

Walking just outside of the relatively new, thriving city of Yathrib, 500 men armed with swords came to welcome the Messenger and Abu Bakr. The women and children dressed up to joyously greet the Messenger.

The influential residents and supporters of Yathrib – called the Ansar – insisted that the Messenger honor them by being a guest in their homes. Some people began grabbing the Messenger's she-camel and struggling to take control of her reigns in hope that he would go with them.

"Let her go," the Messenger said, gesturing to his she-camel. "She is under a command from The Majestic."

As the throngs of people made way for the camel, she raised her head and began to stride through the streets of Yathrib, which the Messenger renamed, "Madinah." It is a source of purity and a place with natural undercurrent of water, conferring fertile agricultural land. She paused at several houses and passed an intelligent glance over the neighborhoods of the new city. The people of Madinah eagerly waited, wondering where the camel would eventually stop. They followed her hopefully, until the camel arrived at a place and gently sank to her knees, content.

The Messenger asked the people, "Who owns this place?"

They said, "It is owned by two orphans – Sahl and Suhayl."

The two boys were distant maternal relatives to the Messenger.⁷⁶

"I would like to buy this land," the Messenger said to Sahl and Suhayl.

The two boys readily offered, "We want to give it to you, oh Messenger."

The Messenger refused. They then agreed on a price. This would become the site of the Messenger's home in Madinah and a place of prayer for all.

Now at the age of 53, the Messenger supplicated, "Oh Majestic One, make Madinah beloved to us like we used to love the City or even more than we used to love the City. Oh Majestic One, bless us in our food measurements. Oh Majestic One, remove all of the plagues and fevers of Madinah and throw it outside of Madinah in the barren land..."⁷⁷

There had been a fever and illness which gripped Abu Bakr, Bilal, and the people who emigrated from the City. Shortly after the Messenger's arrival, he prayed to The Majestic, and his request was granted. The fever dissipated, and no plague will ever again grip the people of Madinah.

Shortly after arriving, the Messenger visited the local bazaars, laden with fragrant dates, oil incense, vegetable stalls, fabrics, and craft goods. Children ran through the dusty alleyways. All the major markets belonged to the Jewish merchants of Madinah. The Messenger disapproved practices which had any level of cheating or deception. He had the believers establish their own market place, forbidding taxes on merchants for being in the market and encouraging honest business practices and direct, transparent dealings between buyers and sellers. The new market blossomed and allowed the community of believers to be financially independent.⁷⁸

Amidst the blistering heat of the dry season, the Messenger and his believers gathered palm tree trunks, leaves, and clay bricks to begin building the place of prayer in Madinah, even before the living quarters of the Messenger were erected. As the walls were raised, the Messenger and believers chanted with great gusto from the quarry to the construction site. The job took two weeks to complete, creating a space which was the nexus point for education, socializing, marriages, important meetings, and a resting place for the impoverished. Many notable emigrants originally from the City and some from the Ansar took shelter there so that they could be close to and learn from the Messenger. This place of prayer is a niche drawing the sincere believers closer to Paradise.

The Messenger spent his first six months in Madinah living with his distant cousin since he did not yet have a house in the vicinity. His cousin and wife frequently cooked plentiful food for the Messenger and offered it to him.⁷⁹

Given the evolving political and religious landscape, the Messenger – along with those who followed the faith, the Jews, and the non-believers of Madinah – ratified a written Constitution for the emerging nation state. Excerpts of it included –

In the name of The Majestic, the Merciful, the Beneficent.

- This is a document drawn up by the Praiseworthy, the Messenger for the believers...from the Quraysh and Madinah, and whoever joins them and takes part in their struggle for their cause: they are one nation, distinguished from all other people...
- Anyone from among the Jews who joins us shall have our support and equal rights with us, suffering no oppression and fearing no alliance against them...
- No non-believer shall extend protection to any property or any person belonging to the Quraysh, nor shall he stand between them and any believer...
- No believer who accepts this treaty and believes in The Majestic and the Last Day may give support or shelter to any criminal...

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- No non-believer shall extend protection to any property or any person belonging to the Quraysh, nor shall he stand between them and any believer...
- No believer who accepts this treaty and believes in The Majestic and the Last Day may give support or shelter to any criminal...

- The Jews have their own religion and the believers have their own. This applies to them and their allies...
- They are required to render support against anyone who fights any party to this agreement...Support shall be given to the oppressed. The Jews are required to share the expenses with believers as long as the latter are engaged in a war...Anything that takes place between the parties to this agreement, or any dispute that may develop between them, is to be referred for arbitration to The Majestic...and to the Praiseworthy, His Messenger...The parties to this agreement shall support each other against anyone who attacks Madinah...⁸⁰

This Constitution was unprecedented at the time and had far reaching implications. It allowed for religious freedom for its diverse people and recognized their human rights. The Jews in Madinah could maintain their own religion according to the Torah, coexisting and cooperating with the believers as neighbors. Some of the Jews converted to become believers but many did not. The Messenger made it clear that there was no compulsion in matters of faith. Further, he vowed that if any of the Jews or believers were unjustly oppressed, he would provide them protection regardless of faith.

Despite how revolutionary this Constitution was, tensions between the Jews and believers mounted. Many of the Jews recognized that he was the Messenger who had been predicted in the original Torah and the earliest Gospel, but because he was a descendent of Ishmael and not from their preferred ethnicity, they rejected him.

The Messenger and the believers had been praying in the direction of Jerusalem, similar to the Jewish tribes in Madinah. He supplicated to The Majestic to turn their faces in prayer to the holiest Sanctuary in the City. Early one morning, The Majestic revealed verses in the Book which finally restored the tradition that Abraham and Ishmael followed, changing the direction of prayer from Jerusalem to the City at last.⁸¹

Like a ray of light that slowly breaks through the clouds and grows to reveal the sun, the words and lifestyle of the Messenger

enlightened far reaching corners of the Peninsula. Drawn to the light, war-torn tribes learned to put down their swords and began to mend as they, too, accepted the faith.

19. Forces from Beyond

Adrenaline pumped through the lifeblood of Madinah. Breathing deeply and bowing their heads in humility before The Majestic, the believers absorbed the latest, sweeping development.

“Permission has been given to fight,” The Majestic revealed, “to those who are being fought. Permission is being given to defend themselves because they have been oppressed. And The Majestic is capable of giving them victory. Those who were chased out of their homes without any right except that they said our Master is The Majestic.”⁸²

The believers from the City thought back to all the persecution they endured, turning the other cheek. They remembered the heat of the sun pounding on their backs as they fled from their homes, leaving almost all material goods they owned. Until this point, they were not permitted to take up arms.

The Messenger sent out scouts to conduct surveillance missions, assessing Qurayshi trade caravans that traversed Madinah from Syria to the City and from the City to Yemen. This was the economic lifeline for the self-declared enemy of the believers.

On one expedition, the Messenger picked eight believers who were originally from the City, led by his cousin. The Messenger gave him a letter and directed them to travel northeast for two days. At that point, he was to open his sealed letter for further instructions. When the Messenger’s cousin opened the letter, they were directed to travel just East of the City, conduct reconnaissance of the Quraysh, and return with information collected. The Messenger had sent them in the opposite direction so that the utmost secrecy could be maintained regarding their destination. Given the risk involved with the mission, each member of the group was given a choice to continue on or return back to Madinah. With great courage, they all decided to travel to the City, feeling that it could not be long before they met their end.

One morning, they woke up to find one of their four camels had broken free and went missing. Two of the men urged the rest of the group to continue with the expedition while they would find some way to return back to Madinah. On the last day of the series of sacred months, the remaining six men arrived at a date palm grove outside of the City. Before they could set up camp, the Qurayshi caravan was spotted. They quickly hid, observing the treasured raisins, spices, and other goods loaded on several handsome camels. The believing men contemplated whether or not to seize the caravan, given that the norm was not to fight anyone during a sacred month. Thoughts of all the pilferage and Qurayshi oppression swam in their minds, but ultimately it was the opportunity to benefit the nation state with the caravan’s bounty that was too hard to resist.

The six believers surprise attacked. With a cloud of sand kicked up by startled camels, the believers captured the caravan. Two merchants were taken prisoner, and one Qurayshi man was slain in the conflict. The expedition immediately returned to Madinah with the booty.

When the Messenger saw them return with wealth from the caravan and then learned that someone was killed during a sacred month, he refused to accept the goods.

Stressed by what had happened, the Messenger said, "I did not command you to fight."⁸³

The Quraysh exploited the situation and sent word to tribes across the Peninsula, pointing to what the believers had done, conveniently ignoring the persecution they had perpetrated for years. The oppressors cried out as though they were the oppressed.

At that point, The Majestic revealed, "They ask you about the sacred month - about fighting therein. Say, 'Fighting therein is great sin, but averting people from the way of The Majestic and disbelief in Him and preventing access to the Sanctuary and the expulsion of its people therefrom are greater evils in the sight of The Majestic. And persecution is worse than killing.'"⁸⁴

The sand settled in Madinah and everyone took a sigh of relief. The Messenger then accepted the booty from the expedition. He also sent a message to the Quraysh to send ransom for the two prisoners on the condition that the two believers who had lost their camel returned to Madinah safely, which came to pass. One of the prisoners actually embraced the faith and made sure that his ransom reached the Messenger.

It was the month of Ramadan, when the believers fasted, giving up food and drink during daylight hours for the sake of The Majestic. The Messenger sent out scouts to locate Abu Sufyan's caravan, which should have been passing Madinah, returning from Syria en route to the City. When there was a sighting, the scouts rushed back to inform the Messenger that the travelers had 40 armed guards along with 1,000 camels, many of them carrying foreign merchandise. This substantial amount of wealth had been derived from the contributions of almost every household in the City as well as property confiscated from emigrating believers. Gaining control of this caravan would reposition the new nation state's treasury and bring the City's economy to its knees.

Standing up in the central place of prayer, the Messenger maintained the element of surprise and said, "We have a mission to undertake. So whoever has his animal ready should come with me."

The firm of heart joined him and they immediately left town with speed and secrecy. Most in the group had no idea where they were going. The Messenger took turns walking and riding a camel with the others.

Shortly thereafter, the Messenger shared, "This is the caravan of the Quraysh. It is coming back to you and it has in it the money of the Quraysh. So let us go out to meet it. Perhaps The Majestic will give it to you."⁸⁵

Cradled in a plain between the City and Madinah, the believers traveled to an area called Badr and waited for the caravan to appear on the horizon.

Abu Sufyan knew that the Messenger was planning to target his band of Quraysh, and thus, sent out spies in advance to spot any scouts dispatched by the believers. Abu Sufyan was so concerned that he even crept up on a camp of two opposing scouts and examined their markings. He went so far as to open up camel dung, at which point he identified date seeds from Madinah. His suspicions were confirmed! Abu Sufyan became paranoid and diverted his caravan, taking a longer trek along the sea line back to the City. He would avoid the Messenger at all costs. Thinking like a politician, he also sent forth a speedy crier named Damdam to the City with the fastest camel to warn his tribe and request reinforcements against the believers.

Back in the City, Atikah, a paternal aunt of the Messenger, had a dream where a man rode into town on a camel and announced, "Oh traitors, meet your death three days from now."

The rider then repeated his premonition at the Sanctuary. After reiterating the warning a third time atop a mountain, he picked up a big stone and flung it down. As it came tumbling down, the boulder broke apart into smaller stones, striking every house in the City.

Atikah called her brother, Al-'Abbas, and told him about her nightmare, which symbolized an impending calamity which would afflict every family of the Quraysh. Although Al-'Abbas told her to keep her dream to herself, he took the liberty of sharing it with the

poet, Walid, asking him to keep it a secret too. Before long, word spread and it was the talk of the City.

Late in the afternoon the next day, after conducting his business, Al-'Abbas went to the Sanctuary to circle it seven times. Abu Jahl and his friends were there and asked him to meet them after the ritual.

Shortly thereafter, Abu Jahl mocked, "When did this female prophet appear among you?"

Taken aback, Al-'Abbas reacted, "What are you talking about?"

Abu Jahl indicated that he knew about Atikah's dream. Al-'Abbas acted as though he was not aware of it.

Abu Jahl persisted, "You...are not satisfied to claim a man messenger. You are now claiming a woman messenger. Atikah alleges that the man in her dream said, 'Rise in three days.' Well, we will wait these three days, and if nothing happens to confirm her dream, we will write a formal assertion that you are the biggest liars..."

Al-'Abbas denied that Atikah even had the dream. That evening, the women of his sub-tribe expressed their displeasure with him for not defending their tribal honor. Al-'Abbas felt sorry and vowed to approach Abu Jahl the following day.

When the third day had arrived, Al-'Abbas went to the Sanctuary in the morning and before he could confront a pale-looking, embarrassed Abu Jahl, Damdam had arrived with his warning. Damdam had cut up his own shirt and was standing on his camel, whose poor nose had been mutilated for dramatic effect. Damdam took his job as Abu Sufyan's crier very seriously.

He exclaimed, "A tragedy! A disaster! Your property with Abu Sufyan is being intercepted by the Praiseworthy and his friends. I doubt whether you can save the caravan. Help! Help!"⁸⁶

After Damdam had uttered his exaggeration, the people realized that the first part of Atikah's dream had come true. Within a day, the Quraysh initially mobilized an unprecedented 1,300 man army, led by Abu Jahl. They planned to march out and confront the

Messenger. Although large in number, their hearts were disunited. They gathered their resources, including a fleet of camels, 100 horses, and 600 suits of armor. The Quraysh also summoned their singing girls, arrogantly orchestrating cheerleaders for their upcoming battle. Anyone who had any honor joined the contingent. The ones who did not sent mercenaries in their place. His cowardice and tribalism weighing heavily on him, Abu Lahab decided not to go and instead sent a man in his place who owed him money. By doing so, the debt was forgiven.

Before the Quraysh left the City, they gathered around the Sanctuary structure, hanging on to its cloth and its large rings.

"Whichever of these two armies is more noble in your eyes," the Qurayshi leaders supplicated to The Majestic, despite their paganism, "help them. Whichever of these two groups is more honorable, then give them victory. Send your aid upon the better of the two tribes."

Before the Quraysh could cover much ground, doubts surfaced and many soldiers became fearful that the rival tribe of Bacr would attack their homes in the City while they were away for war. Some began to debate whether it was better to turn back.

Aware of the situation and desperate to oppose the believers, Satan left his throne situated above the waters and physically appeared in the form of the warrior, Suraqah.⁸⁷

To boost Qurayshi morale, Satan said to them, "Don't worry. I have heard of your fear. I promise you that as long as you are gone, I am your protector. You can count on my word that the tribe of Bacr will not attack the City. I will accompany you as well so that you know that I am serious. I will fight along with you."

When Abu Sufyan felt that the caravan was in safety, he sent an envoy to the Qurayshi army, requesting that they return to the City.

The Quraysh convened to discuss whether or not to stay the course. Some suggested that they go back because there was no need to fight.

Abu Jahl said, "No, we will go to Badr, and we will stay there for three days, and we will drink our wine and have our women sing for us, and let the people hear that we are a strong and mighty nation."

Knowing that the caravan was secure, 300 warriors nevertheless deserted and returned home.

Meanwhile, the group of believers was not aware of the Qurayshi army marching their way and was instead planning to seize the loaded caravan. As travelers passed in the opposite direction, the Messenger received news that the Quraysh had left the City with a formidable force.

The Messenger asked his friends, "What do you think that instead if we met a group from the City that has already been informed of your departure?"

In response, several in the group pointed out that they had left their homes spontaneously. Most had not come prepared for a full scale battle! They lacked sufficient armor, food, and supplies. Despite being sincere believers, they were also sincere warriors and did not like such a scenario. Some protested to the Messenger, even though the reality was becoming quickly apparent.

"Even if we meet the other group," the Messenger reassured them, "The Majestic has promised us victory."

When the believers arrived at the plains of Badr, the Messenger and Abu Bakr bravely went by themselves to scout for information given the tense situation. They came across a nomad.

"Do you have any information," the Messenger asked, "about the Quraysh and about the Praiseworthy and his army?"

The nomad asked, "Who are you?"

The Messenger responded, "I promise to tell you where we are from as long as you tell us any information that you have."

Reassured, the nomad shared, "What has reached us is that the Praiseworthy has left Yathrib on that date. If this is true, then they are camped right outside of Badr. It has reached me that the army of the

Quraysh has left the City on another date. If that is accurate, then they must be on the other side of Badr."

Now the Messenger had to share where he was from.

He simply stated, "We are from water."

Then the Messenger and Abu Bakr departed.

When they rejoined the army of believers, the Messenger first went and prayed. Before he could finish, a commotion broke out. The believers intercepted two young slave men from the Qurayshi army. Tensions running high, the believers tried to interrogate them until the Messenger finished praying. The Messenger posed his own inquiries.

"How many people are in the [Qurayshi] army?" the Messenger asked.

They responded, "We are slaves... We don't know anything."

The Messenger inquired, "You are workers. How many camels do they kill every day?"

The slaves disclosed, "Nine or ten."

"They are between 900 to 1,000," the Messenger deduced.⁸⁸

The believers had less than 100 camels, let alone spare animals to slaughter for feasting. They looked around at their comparatively sparse company. They stood together at Badr, 310 in number. They were outnumbered three to one. But long ago, the army of David numbered approximately 310, and he defeated Goliath. They stood in the sun, together sweating and hoping for a miracle to happen again.

The two slaves disclosed the names of many elite Qurayshi leaders who had come to Badr for the battle. As this news spread, compounded by the challenging odds, even the most seasoned of warriors became demoralized and winced with unease. Meanwhile, the Messenger smiled because The Majestic had already promised victory.

"The City has thrust out her best children to you," he declared.

Seeing the dejected expression of his friends, the Messenger looked assuredly across the plain with his army, pointing out the exact

places where each Qurayshi leader would fall in battle and meet their end.

The Messenger called a meeting and asked, "You know the situation as it is. What do you think we should do now?"

After praising The Majestic and sending peace upon the Messenger, Abu Bakr said, "Do as you please. We are behind you."

The Messenger acknowledged favorably.

He asked again, "What do you think we should do?"

Umar stood up and said, "Do as you please, for verily we will do anything you want us to do."

The Messenger was pleased with his loyal friend's response.

He asked the same question a third time.

One of the clan leaders who was originally from the City passionately said, "Oh Messenger of The Majestic, do whatever you are commanded to do because The Majestic has sent you with the truth. We will not say like the tribe of Israel said, 'Go you and your Lord and fight. We are going to stay here.' Take us to the corner of the world, and we will follow you until we meet what The Majestic's decree has destined for us."

Noticing that nobody from the Ansar had spoken yet, he asked again, "What do you think we should do?"

The famed, young Ansari clan leader, Saad ibn Muadh, said, "We believed in you. We trust what you are saying is true, that The Majestic sent you with the truth. We have given you our promises and our oaths that we will listen and obey you. Go forth and do as you see fit, and we are with you. For I swear by the One who has sent you with the truth, were you to take us into the ocean, then we would go right behind you! We are not scared of meeting the enemy tomorrow. We are well tried in war. Perhaps our strength will cool your eye when you see how well we can fight. Go forth upon the blessings of The Majestic. We are right behind you."

Upon hearing this, the Messenger's face lit up brightly like the full moon on a clear night. Born and bred in the middle of the desert, the ocean meant destruction to the believers, who really did not have

boats and many did not know how to swim! The people of Madinah had never been conquered by foreigners before, and this brave, independent spirit emerged with war on the horizon.

As the believers made preparations for battle, the Messenger organized the army into three flanks. On the right flank, Ali was put in charge of the believers who hailed from the City. On the left side, the Messenger directed Saad ibn Muadh to lead the Ansar. By organizing the soldiers along origin or ethnicity, each flank would be more comfortable in battle. Who better to fight alongside than one's neighbor, childhood friend, or relative?

The Messenger made Musab the flag bearer, given that he was esteemed by believers from both the City and Madinah. It was a risky assignment, given that the one holding the flag would be especially targeted and attacked by the enemy. The Messenger's pragmatic selection of Musab, Ali, and Saad ibn Muadh put three highly noble, dynamic leaders at the head of the army, which engendered respect in the ranks.

Although the Messenger initially set up camp on the outskirts of Badr, a soldier suggested that they station the army past the midpoint of the plains, such that the water wells were in their zone, effectively eliminating the Qurayshi army's access. The Messenger acted upon the recommendation, and after they strategically transferred the water from the smaller wells into one major location, the believers plugged up the others.

The Messenger stayed up almost the entire night, praying, begging, and pleading to The Majestic for His help. He prostrated over and over in a prolonged manner.

"Oh Majestic One," the Messenger prayed, "if you destroy this group, you are not going to be worshiped on earth."

That night, it rained in the desert. A cool breeze breathed through the plain, and morning dawned with a crystal clearness that rises after a refreshing rain. The army of believers were purified physically and spiritually. The sand underneath them was made firm with the rain. They slept deeply under a blanket of peace and security, despite being at the gate of a momentous battle.

However, conditions were not as favorable on the Qurayshi side. The Messenger dozed off for a bit and dreamt that the number of Quraysh appeared small. It was but a contingent of the opposition. At dawn on a Friday, the Messenger arose hopeful and woke the army up for the morning prayer.

The Messenger, who was now 55 years old, was at the front of the army and arranged the men in straight, upright rows, which was a military tactic unknown in the Peninsula. The soldiers with spears were positioned in front, warriors with swords in the middle, and archers in the rear.

The two armies marched toward one another. The whinnies and whines of camels and horses preceded the Quraysh as they marched forward, armed to the teeth with bows and arrows of the finest make. The believers could see the silver glint of swords, chain mail, and crested helmets as the opposing army appeared on the horizon. The believers had no chain mail and were nowhere as well equipped as the opposition.

When the Qurayshi forces, with all of their banners and drums, came into the Messenger's sight, he lifted his hands to the sky and prayed, "O Majestic One, here come Quraysh full of vanity and pride, who oppose You and call Your Messenger a liar. O Majestic One, your help that has been promised...cause them to be destroyed today."⁸⁹

The Messenger turned to the believers and commanded them, "Do not move forward until I have given you the order. When they approach, try to repel them with your arrows. Do not draw out your swords until they have reached you."⁹⁰

Observing the group of believing warriors – many from their own families – caused the Qurayshi leaders to think twice. They tried to convince Abu Jahl to completely withdraw their army from the confrontation, but he was hell bent on war and manipulated them to stay the course. Abu Jahl was convinced that since their numbers were so much greater, they were going to triumph. He dispatched instructions for a victory festival to last three nights with plenty of feasting and entertainment.

Abu Jahl instinctively called out to The Majestic in a passion, "Whichever of the two of these armies has brought more evil, and whichever of these two has cut the ties of kinship, and whichever has brought the more unknown doctrines, let them meet their death today!"

As the two armies stood facing each other, poised before battle, three men from the Quraysh – two brothers and a son – stepped out onto the open field for an opening bout of one-on-one combat, challenging the believers to send their best warriors. The Messenger commanded Humza, Ali, and another believer to stand up and go forward. As adrenaline flowed through their veins, the two elders faced off, the two middle aged warriors engaged, and the two young soldiers fought. Swords flashed through the desert air and the two armies watched, holding their breath. Within seconds, Ali and Humza struck down their opponents. The third believer struggled as his leg was slashed off, until Ali and Humza rescued him and cut down the enemy soldier. They carried the wounded man off the battlefield, and he died a few days later as a martyr.

As the Messenger repeatedly prayed for aid in earnest, with his head turned to the sky, his upper garment accidentally fell off. Abu Bakr grabbed it off the ground and wrapped it around the Messenger.

Abu Bakr hugged the Messenger, lowered his hands from supplication, and said, "Enough, oh Messenger, your Lord will give you as you have promised."

Immediately the Messenger's eyes closed, and he received a revelation. When it was over, the Messenger faced the army, and he was bright as the moon.

He exclaimed, "The help of The Majestic has come. This is Gabriel. He has worn his turban, and he is holding on to the straps of his horse guiding it through the valley."⁹¹

The Majestic revealed, "Remember when you sought help of your Master, and He answered you, 'I will help you with a thousand of the angels, rank on rank'...Remember when your Master inspired to the angels, 'Verily, I am with you, so keep firm those who have believed. I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieved...'"⁹²

The Majestic selected and sent down the thousand best, elite angels in the entire unseen realm to battle the Quraysh alongside the believers on the earthly plains of Badr.

When Satan – still in the form of the warrior Suraqah – saw the angels descending from the sky to the earth, he turned back and began to run in terror like a coward. The Quraysh were surprised that after he gave them his word, he was fleeing. They questioned him, and one Qurayshi even tried to detain him. Satan then revealed his true self and pushed the man with such force that the Qurayshi went flying up into the air and landed on his back.⁹³

More humiliated than ever before, Satan lashed out as he retreated, “Verily, I have nothing to do with you. Verily! I see what you see not. Verily! I fear The Majestic, for The Majestic is severe in punishment.”⁹⁴

Standing ready, the Messenger repeatedly recited aloud a verse previously revealed in the Book, “Their multitude will be put to flight, and they will show their backs.”⁹⁵

He then picked up some rocks and threw it in the direction of the Quraysh. The Majestic miraculously amplified the throw, causing the enemy to feel temporarily blinded. Caught off guard, the Qurayshi soldiers rubbed their eyes.

The Messenger said, “May these faces be cursed.”

Before going forward into combat, the Messenger’s battle cry was, “Oh Majestic One, besides whom there is no other Master, give victory!”

The armies flew at each other like two waves crashing against one another in the sea. Arrows rained down from the sky and the clash of metal on metal broke out everywhere. The air rang with sounds of war.

The angels had descended onto the battlefield and fought alongside the believers. The forces from beyond this realm had their own weapons and steeds. They were wearing the same clothes and yellow turban as a warrior loyal to the Messenger. As the believers raised their swords to hit the enemy, angels completed the task by

striking at the necks and joints of the Qurayshi soldiers. Seated at an elevated distance, two onlookers actually saw the angels coming down. Unable to believe his eyes, one of the two onlookers was overwhelmed with a heart attack and died from the shock.

The Messenger alternated between engaging in combat and praying for help in a tent set up as headquarters for the believers. When he was on the field, the Messenger bravely willed his way to the enemy and was the most aggressive of all believers in battle. Abu Bakr loyally followed him as he went up and down the plains of Badr. During difficult moments, some of the believers came closer to the Messenger as they fought the more sizable Qurayshi contingent.

A courageous believer who had shattered his sword upon hitting enemy armor, went to the Messenger to complain of his situation. The Messenger lifted a twig from the ground and handed it to the warrior. The believer seized his new weapon, with complete faith, and proceeded back to the field armed with the shoot. As he reentered, the twig transformed into the most spectacular sword he had witnessed in his life. The believer would use this weapon for many more future battles and when he was finally martyred, he was buried with his incredible sword.⁹⁶

Two young Ansari teenagers, Muadh ibn Amr and Muawwadh, agreed to compete on who would kill Abu Jahl first at Badr. He had been one of the cruelest amongst the Quraysh toward the Messenger, and this was no secret.

One of the Ansari youth asked an older believer, “Have you seen Abu Jahl before?”

The man responded, “Yes, what do you want with him?”

The youth said, “I have heard that he has disrespected the Messenger. I have given an oath to The Majestic that if I see him, my shadow will overlap with his shadow until one of the two of us is dead.”

Then the other Ansari teenager asked the man the same question, to which an identical answer was given. When Abu Jahl was spotted in a tree grove, surrounded by Qurayshi warriors, both Muadh ibn Amr and Muawwadh dashed through the heat of the mayhem. The enemy forces did not really recognize or stop them. Muadh ibn Amr

managed to weave through the trees and jumped with all his might, completely severing off Abu Jahl's left leg with a sword, just like a date seed flying off upon impact in a grinder. Abu Jahl's son reacted with a sword swipe that almost cut off Muadh ibn Amr's right arm. His limb barely attached by a sliver of skin and getting in the way, he pinned his hand under a foot and ripped off his injured arm. Muawwadh was also able to deliver a powerful blow to Abu Jahl. Both Ansari teenagers raced back to the Messenger and shared the news that Abu Jahl had been struck down. Muawwadh died as a martyr at Badr.

The believers held their ground despite the sheer odds against them. Blow after blow, they took down the pillars of the Qurayshi army. When the Quraysh saw Abu Jahl and the rest of their leaders falling one after the other, they fled through the only passageway accessible back to the City, which the Messenger had not blocked.

And so it came to pass that the believers decisively won the Battle of Badr, a day when truth was made clear from falsehood.

When the battle was over, the Messenger instructed the believers to find the body of Abu Jahl. One of the shepherds from the City, serving as a warrior, managed to find him lying on the field, injured and nearing death.

The warrior put his foot on Abu Jahl's chest and asked, "Do you finally admit that The Majestic has disgraced you?"

Abu Jahl responded stubbornly, "How have I been disgraced? I am only a man killed by his people. Tell me, who has secured victory in battle?"

The warrior said, "The Majestic and His Messenger have won."

Only then noticing a foot on his chest, Abu Jahl looked up through a daze of pain and remarked, "You have stepped on a high place, oh son of a shepherd."

The warrior lowered his sword to cut off Abu Jahl's head but the weapon had become dull from battle. He instead took Abu Jahl's own sharp sword and executed him. The warrior returned to the Messenger and confirmed the location of Abu Jahl's corpse.

The Messenger asked, "You swear by The Majestic?"

The warrior swore thrice.

The Messenger said, "Show me his body."

They walked over to the scene, and the Messenger saw Abu Jahl dead with his own eyes.

The Messenger remarked, "This man was the pharaoh of this community."^{97,98}

As the believers rejoiced at their victory at Badr, on the same exact day, another battle was won. Just as had been predicted in the Book eight and a half years ago, in the area of Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine, the Christian Romans resoundingly defeated the pagan Persians in battle after having lost several prior campaigns against its arch nemesis.⁹⁹

In the aftermath of the conflict at Badr, the spoils of war were significant. As the believers discussed who should receive them, The Majestic revealed how the booty should be distributed. Whereas 80% was allocated to the army, the remainder was to be given to the Messenger (4%), his relatives (4%), the orphans (4%), poor people (4%), and travelers (4%).

The Messenger instructed the troops that they would stay in Badr for three days to protect against a counter-offensive, as well as to signal a clear victory over the Quraysh. This also gave enough time to bury their 14 martyrs where they died. On the Day of Judgment, their wounds will smell of perfume. The Quraysh suffered 70 casualties on the battlefield, five times more than the believers. The bodies of the dead Qurayshi soldiers were buried in a dry well.

On the third day when the believers were departing Badr, the Messenger and warriors stopped by the burial well.

Calling out each fallen Qurayshi leader individually by name, the Messenger said, "Have you found what your Master has promised you to be true? As for me, I have found The Majestic's promise to be true."

Umar asked, "Oh Messenger, how can you speak to bodies that have no soul?"

The Messenger responded, "I swear by the One in whose hands is my soul, you are not able to hear me now any better than they can, but they cannot respond to me."

The Majestic had miraculously brought the defeated, powerless Qurayshi leaders back to life briefly so that they could hear in humiliation and guilt the Messenger's rhetorical question and comment. While this was an exceptional instance, the dead generally cannot hear when the living speak to them.

The laws of war having not yet been completely revealed, the Messenger took approximately 70 Qurayshi soldiers prisoner.

As he surveyed the captives, the Messenger thought back to all the years of hunger and oppression the believers went through. The dying face of Abu Talib and the misery of the boycott were in his memory. He also remembered the kind face of Al-Mutim, who also never accepted the message, yet fed the believers, broke them free of the boycott, and gave the Messenger protection upon his return from Taif to the City.

Grateful beyond words to the Majestic for all the good in the world, the Messenger declared, "If al-Mutim had been alive right now and he spoke to me to free all of these people, I would have freed them all for him."

Showing great mercy, the Messenger ordered that most of the Qurayshi prisoners be spared or ransomed, as was common practice in that time. By not executing the majority of them, it was likely that these same men would return to fight the believers in any future battle. The Messenger did, however, command that two captives be executed because of how evil and extreme their animosity had been toward the Messenger and the faith.

In advance of his arrival, the Messenger dispatched criers – Zayd and Ibn Rawahah – to Madinah to share news of their victory. Zayd, the adopted son of the Messenger, rode into town on the Messenger's camel. He praised The Majestic several times. Zayd announced loudly that the believers had won the battle and killed

virtually all of the senior leadership of the Quraysh. The believers were astounded and elated that the Messenger and his friends had prevailed.

As Zayd arrived, Uthman ibn Affan had finished burying his wife, Ruqayyah. She was also the daughter of the Messenger and had fallen severely ill before the believers left in pursuit of the caravan. Although Uthman ibn Affan wanted to join the mission, the Messenger asked him to stay back and care for her.

As the Messenger returned triumphantly and yet humbly to Madinah, he was deeply saddened when he found out that his dear daughter had died. It would be remembered as the day of great joy and great sadness. After some time had passed, Uthman married Umm Kulthum, who was also a daughter of the Messenger.

Since there was no central prison, the Messenger commanded the believers who captured prisoners to host them in their own residences and treat them kindly. Eager to obey and be generous to their captive, a group of the Ansar gave their limited meat and bread to their guest captive, while they ate dates with water. The next-in-line chieftains of the Quraysh who were not slain in battle, including Suhayl, were housed in the Messenger's own living quarters. No other prisoners of war had received this type of generous treatment before. Experiencing such mercy left an impression on them, and many eventually embraced the faith.¹⁰⁰

The Messenger sent word to the Quraysh in the City regarding the identity of prisoners in Madinah who were being ransomed. Despite finally gaining the upper hand, the Messenger was just. Affluent prisoners had a higher ransom while the poorer ones were eventually set free without any payment. Some of the literate captives who did not have money were released after they taught the Ansari children how to read and write. Although Al-'Abbas was the Messenger's uncle, he was asked to pay his ransom plus that of his two captured nephews.

Addressing the Messenger, Al-'Abbas said, "I am a believer. Why are you placing a ransom on me?"

"The Majestic knows best," the Messenger responded.

Al-'Abbas complained, "I don't have any money."

"Where is that money that you and your wife hid on that date when you buried it and you said to her, 'If I ever die, then this will go to my wife and this will go to my son...'" the Messenger asked. "Where is that money that you hid?"

"I swear by the One who has sent you with the truth," Al-'Abbas gasped, "that you are the Messenger of The Majestic. No one knew about this other than me and her!"

Al-'Abbas willingly paid the ransom.

On the other side of the Peninsula, when a disheveled crier returned to the City to announce the defeat and extent of casualties, the people were in disbelief. Shortly thereafter, the defeated remnants of the Qurayshi army returned. Most households in the City had someone wailing for their fallen, just like the dream of Atikah had predicted. The grief was so loud and prolonged that Abu Sufyan convened a meeting of the Quraysh and made an unprecedented decision to ban the women from wailing because he did not want to give the believers any type of pleasure. Depriving people of such an emotional outlet was not easy on top of an already difficult hardship. Bottled, the City's anguish festered.

After Abu al-As, the son-in-law of the Messenger, was held as a prisoner in Madinah for fighting alongside the Quraysh, he was released for no ransom and returned to the City about a month after the Battle of Badr. Abu al-As had agreed to let his wife, Zaynab, the Messenger's eldest daughter, be reunited with her father in Madinah. Zayd and an Ansari friend were dispatched to wait at a predetermined location outside the City to receive and escort Zaynab. Embarrassed that he was parting ways with his wife, Abu al-As requested his brother to take her to Zayd's location.

In broad daylight, Abu al-As' brother led Zaynab as she sat on a camel. Word spread of the defenseless departure of the Messenger's daughter, and a gang of Qurayshi men intercepted and surrounded them. A foolish member among them threw a spear toward Zaynab, her camel became alarmed, and she was thrown up, falling hard on a

rock. She began bleeding and had a miscarriage. Her injury never fully healed, and Zaynab would die a few years later in Madinah.

Although outnumbered, Abu al-As' brother rushed to her aid and courageously said to the Qurayshi gang, "I swear by The Majestic, anyone who approaches me will taste my sword and my bow and arrow. And every one of you knows how good of a marksman I am."¹⁰¹

Learning of the situation, Abu Sufyan quickly came over and dispersed the gang.

He then said, "You have certainly been unwise in taking the lady out in broad daylight, while you are fully aware of the catastrophe that has befallen us at the hands of the Praiseworthy and his believers... We certainly have no desire to prevent her joining her father... I would counsel you to go back with her now and stay back in the City until the incident is forgotten. Once it is known that we have caused her to return, you may, if you wish, take her out quietly and resume your journey."¹⁰²

A few days later at night time, Abu al-As' brother accompanied Zaynab to meet Zayd and his Ansari friend. She was then escorted safely to Madinah.

Abu Sufyan was still not a believer. He had not gone into battle, but rather led the caravan back to the City. Abu Sufyan was very upset that the Quraysh had lost the battle. He once again started writing poetry unfavorable to the Messenger.

Abu Lahab, who was also Abu Sufyan's uncle, called him to the house of Al-'Abbas, who had not returned yet. Al-'Abbas' wife and servant were present during the meeting.

Abu Lahab said, "Tell me exactly what happened."

Piecing together reports from the battlefield, Abu Sufyan responded, "By The Majestic, as soon as we met them, it was as if they overpowered us without us doing anything. They took prisoners as they pleased. They killed as they pleased. Despite all that happened, I cannot criticize my own side because, by The Majestic, I saw a group of men with white faces riding horses that were black and white

hovering between the heavens and Earth. None of us could overpower them.”

Abu Sufyan sulked, and Abu Lahab felt shattered. Abu Sufyan had sworn that he would not take a bath until he avenged the loss at Badr.

Although it was not his place to speak, the servant happily broke the miserable atmosphere and piped up, “I swear by The Majestic, those were the angels helping the believers.”

Furious, Abu Lahab lunged toward the servant and severely flogged him. Al-‘Abbas’ wife tried to stop Abu Lahab, but he was out of control and started beating her instead.

Wounded, Al-‘Abbas’ wife shrieked, “When the head of the house is gone, this is what you do to his household?”

Abu Lahab became ashamed and bolted out of the house. A few days later, he died of an illness. With most of the senior Qurayshi leaders gone, Abu Sufyan suddenly found himself the leader of the tribe, a position that he was not quite ready for.

20. Laying Siege

In the haze of joy that followed the victory from the Battle of Badr, some portion of the disbelievers in Madinah wished to associate with the rising cause. Like a ripe fruit, the message drew people to its fragrance and sweetness, promising delights now in this world as well as the hereafter. Like fruit flies drawn into the harvest, some people in Madinah accepted the message outwardly, paying lip service to the Messenger. Inwardly and in secret, the faith had not entered into the hearts of a generation of hypocrites.

Separately, while a minority of Jews accepted the message, the majority of them rejected the Messenger, showed open hostility, and mocked his community. The Messenger showed patient diplomacy as he sent a letter to a Jewish sub-tribe in Khaybar, which was 95 miles north of Madinah:

“In the name of The Majestic, the Merciful, the Beneficent.

“From the Praiseworthy, The Majestic’s Messenger, Moses’ colleague and brother, who confirms the message conveyed by Moses.

“The Majestic has said to you, people of the Torah, what you surely find in your scriptures, ‘The Praiseworthy is The Majestic’s Messenger, and those who are with him are firm and unyielding

toward all disbelievers, yet full of mercy toward one other. You see them bowing down, prostrating themselves in prayer, seeking favor with The Majestic and His goodly acceptance. Their marks are on their faces, traced by prostration. This is the example given of them in the Torah as well as in the Gospel: [They are] like a seed that brings forth its shoot and then He strengthens it, so that it grows stout, and in the end stands firm upon its stem, delighting the sowers, so that through them He might confound the unbelievers. The Majestic has promised those of them who attain to faith and do righteous deeds His forgiveness and supreme reward.'

"I appeal to you by The Majestic and by what has been revealed to you and by what The Majestic has fed your predecessors of manna and quails, and I appeal to you by Him who parted the sea for your predecessors to save them from Pharaoh and his might, to tell me:

"Do you find it in your scriptures which have been revealed to you that you must believe in the Praiseworthy? If you do not find this in your scriptures, then let it be so. The right way has now become distinct from the way of error.

"I, therefore, call on you to believe in The Majestic and His Messenger."¹⁰³

Just as most people in Khaybar ignored this beautiful appeal, the largest neighboring Jewish tribe – Qaynuqa – contemplated breaking their treaty with the believers. They were disappointed when the Quraysh decisively lost in battle.

The members of Qaynuqa were well known for their bravery, as well as for being experienced goldsmiths. The Messenger visited them at their market adjacent to Madinah when the relationship became strained. He reminded them of the Constitution of Madinah that their tribe had agreed to.

A leader of Qaynuqa responded, "Oh Praiseworthy, do not be deceived by your recent victory. You fought a group of nobodies. Had you really been fighting men – men like us – you would have seen what the result would have been."

Rather than cooling off tensions, this only escalated matters.

On another occasion, an Ansari woman sold some of her goods and went to the market of Qaynuqa to purchase gold. After she sat in front of a goldsmith, he flirted with her and crudely asked the woman to expose herself. After she refused, he signaled to his friend, who then pegged a portion of her dress in such a way that when she stood up, her garments fell off and she became naked. The woman cried out for help, and the Qaynuqa laughed. A believing man happened to be at the market and responded to her call. He unsheathed his sword and beheaded the perpetrator. The Qaynuqa surrounded the believing man and killed him. When the Messenger learned what had transpired, he sent word to the Qaynuqa that their treaty had been broken.

The Messenger assembled the army and marched to the fortresses of the Qaynuqa. The Qaynuqa had built fortifications with thick, tall walls. When the believers drew near, the other side retreated into their strong fortresses and closed the doors. While the believers lay siege and cut off supplies, nobody from the other two big Jewish tribes around Madinah came to the rescue of the Qaynuqa, given their treacherous actions. As their water supplies dwindled after half a month, the Qaynuqa surrendered. The Messenger instructed that the 700 opposing men be tied up.

Given their predicament, the Qaynuqa requested two representatives from outside of their tribe appeal to the Messenger. One of the envoys completely retracted his support from them and made it clear that his alliance was with The Majestic and the Messenger. The second representative, Ibn Ubayy, had previously declared his acceptance of the message, but was in fact the leader of the hypocrites in Madinah.

Ibn Ubayy went to where the men of Qaynuqa were tied up and insisted that they be set free. The believers in charge refused, as they were following the Messenger's orders. Ibn Ubayy demanded once again that the prisoner ropes be cut.

He said, "Do it or I will do it."

"If you dare do it," the believer responded, "I will kill you."

Relentless, Ibn Ubayy sought out the Messenger and said, "Oh Praiseworthy, be generous with my allies."

The Messenger was silent.

Ibn Ubayy repeated, "Oh Praiseworthy, be generous with my allies."

As the Messenger was still silent and started to turn away, Ibn Ubayy shockingly reached into the Messenger's armor, held him, and repeated the demand.

The Messenger became irritated and said, "Let go of me."

"No, I'm not going to let go," Ibn Ubayy disobeyed.

The Messenger responded, "Woe to you. Let go of me!"

Ibn Ubayy exclaimed, "I swear by The Majestic, I will not let go of you until you promise you are going to treat my allies in a generous manner. These 700 men protected me from everybody, and now you think you will get rid of them in one day. By The Majestic, I am scared of misfortune."

"I give them to you," the Messenger said.

He behaved with great tolerance, mercy, and intelligence. The Messenger then sent word to the Qaynuqa that they had three days to permanently leave town. They begged for more time but the Messenger remained firm. Ibn Ubayy tried to reverse the verdict but was unsuccessful. This Jewish tribe was not expelled because of who they were but because of what they did as exhibited by their mockery, deceit, and treachery. Upon the departure of the Qaynuqa men, women, and children, they left behind a significant amount of property and wealth.¹⁰⁴

21. Intoxicants

Two of the closest friends of the Messenger, Abu Bakr and Umar, both extended marriage proposals to Fatimah, the youngest daughter of the Messenger. She was an exceptionally beautiful and intelligent woman, and considered by some to be the "prize jewel of Madinah."¹⁰⁵

Both Abu Bakr and Umar were turned down. The Messenger had received a command from The Majestic to give Fatimah's hand in marriage to Ali, who was 20 years old then. Ali was overjoyed.

At that time Ali made his living by carrying water from the local wells to people's houses. He had very little wealth to his name. Uthman ibn Affan gave Ali some help with resources for his wedding.

Ali also received two camels which he earmarked for his wedding reception. One day, Ali had the camels stationed just outside of a place in Madinah. Ali's Uncle, Humza, was there drinking, celebrating the victory from Badr. At that point in the faith, being intoxicated during prayers was prohibited.¹⁰⁶

It just so happened that one of the camels outside relieved itself and the foul smell began to float into the establishment where Humza sat.

A woman there sang, "Is Humza one to let a camel spoil this environment?"

Humza was a little drunk, and he decided to take some action. He got up and went out. Humza took out his sword and swung at the animals. Caught in the moment, he slashed the humps off the two camels. He then thrust his hands into their lifeless bodies and pulled out their livers.

Ali appeared a little while later and saw the mutilated camels, once intended for his wedding feast. He started weeping. Ali came to learn that Humza had killed the camels. Ali then went to the Messenger and told him what had happened.

The Messenger approached Humza and asked, "What did you do?"

Humza's eyes had become red.¹⁰⁷

Still drunk, Humza said, "Are you anything but the slave of my father?"

The Messenger heard this and exited without a response.

22. Disobedient Warriors

The tables turned on the City. The anger of the Quraysh was bottled, thirsty to exact revenge on the believers because of their embarrassing loss at Badr. They despised the rising faith. The Quraysh also felt economically constricted as their trade caravans were under threat. Their political influence was being challenged, with the rise of the Messenger and the widening alliances of the new nation state. All the pressure bottled up in the City was about to burst.

Abu Sufyan and his friends went to each Qurayshi household to raise the maximum amount of funds to mount an even bigger army, intent on launching an offensive against the believers in Madinah. Two major tribes – both of which had a vested interest in ensuring that the Qurayshi trade route between Syria and Yemen remain intact – sent their own warriors and lent their suits of armor. The Quraysh assembled an army of 3,000 men with 700 suits of armor and 200 horses. Along with their musicians and cheerleading women, they began traveling to Madinah at a fast pace.

Al-'Abbas sent a servant from the City to deliver a detailed letter to the Messenger. The servant rode as fast he could and arrived outside of Madinah within three days. When the Messenger received the letter, he asked his friend to read it to him. Al-'Abbas warned that the Quraysh had amassed a larger army along with their allies and were on their way to attack the believers at their hometown.

Given the gravity of the situation, the Messenger dispatched scouts to determine the position of the Qurayshi army. When the men returned with a report, the Messenger realized that time was running short to mount a response.

When he had lived in the City, the Messenger had a dream, but he was not able to immediately interpret its meaning.

The Messenger said, "I saw in a dream that I had struck with my sword but my sword broke...Then I hit it again and it came back as strong as it ever was..."¹⁰⁸

The Messenger addressed the believers before the Friday afternoon prayer, promising them victory with conditions, "If you are patient and you do not waiver or flee from the battlefield, and you obey me in what I command."

The Messenger called a broad meeting to inform the community of the situation and to discuss what strategy to employ. His preference was to position the army defensively within Madinah when the impending battle occurred. Even Ibn Ubayy agreed since their town had never fallen with such an approach in the past.

On the other hand, the younger believers voiced a more aggressive strategy to meet the Quraysh outside of Madinah, given that the believers were now 1,000 in number and outfitted with chain mail and other spoils of war from Badr. The more experienced friends of the Messenger did not speak up, because it was not good manners to openly disagree and flare up in the meeting.

The Messenger showed flexibility, and he agreed to go out instead of staying within Madinah. The Messenger, Commander in Chief of the believers, then put on two coats of armor, his helmet, his sword, his bow, and his spear. Seeing the Messenger geared up for

battle, the believers collectively realized that the Messenger's approach to stay in Madinah during the fight would have been better. They sent Humza to speak with the Messenger.

He said to him, "If you want to stay in Madinah, then we will stay within."

The Messenger responded resolutely, "It is not befitting that a Messenger wears his armor and then takes it off until he fights the enemy."

Just before the army left Madinah, another man, Hanzalah, approached the Messenger and confided, "It is my wedding night, and I don't want to delay it. Would you allow me to come later, and I will catch up in the morning?"

The Messenger gave him permission to do so.

The newly wed bride and groom spent that night together. The bride saw a dream that there was an open door to Paradise, and her darling, Hanzalah, walked through it. She tried to follow him, but the door shut as she hurried behind her love! The bride stirred and woke with a lurch as she realized that her husband would soon be martyred in battle.

In the early morning hours, the two of them purified themselves with water and prayed. Afterward, she grabbed him, and they slept together a second time. Hanzalah managed to get up and leave to catch up with the army.¹⁰⁹

The day before on Friday afternoon, the Messenger and the army secretly marched northwest through the date palm groves to the mountain range of Uhud, which is one mile long, peaks at an elevation of 3,533 feet, and is considered to be from Paradise. The believers encamped in a semicircular cove, protected by Uhud's walls on three sides. The Quraysh were the second group to arrive following a journey that lasted one week.

Ibn Ubayy expressed his frustration with the military strategy of facing the Quraysh outside of Madinah. He decided to desert the Messenger and the army, cowardly withdrawing 300 men.

The believers asked the clan leader, "Why are you doing this?"

Ibn Ubayy retorted, "He listened to some of our youth and left my advice. Why should we risk our lives fighting them when he has not listened to us?"

Riding his horse to a retreating Ibn Ubayy, a believer exhorted, "I remind you to fear The Majestic and to not leave your Messenger or the people at this time when the enemy is about to attack. Did you not promise him that you would protect him and defend him like you defend your own families?"

"If we knew there would actually be a fight, we would not leave," Ibn Ubayy called back underhandedly, "but we do not think they are going to attack."

With the hypocrites separating themselves from the true believers, a discussion ensued amongst the remaining warriors. They ultimately decided to be brave and stay. The Messenger was down to a 700 man army, outnumbered by a factor of more than 4 to 1. It was even greater than the initial disparity at Badr. Furthermore, the believers only had 100 suits of armor and a few horses.

A man whose son fell at the Battle of Badr prepared for the upcoming encounter against the army of the Quraysh. That night, while sleeping, he saw his son in a garden beneath which rivers flow, surrounded by lush trees and indescribable beauty.

"Come," said the son, calling his father from Paradise, "and join me."

The father awoke, inspired, and hurried to share his dream with the rest of the army as it prepared to meet the oncoming forces.

On Saturday morning, the Messenger set the army into ranks with their backs to Uhud and facing Madinah. The believers were situated near a narrow stretch of land such that they could maximize their chances of battling a significantly larger enemy. In front of the cove opening was a smaller mountain on which the Messenger instructed the archers to stand, guarding the believers. His collective positioning of the army was nothing short of strategic genius.

As he assessed each believer, he initially turned away a dozen of them because they were under the age of fifteen. The relatives of a brave teenager who was fourteen years old explained that he was an expert archer and would be standing on a mountain during battle. A second teenager, adept at wrestling, was also fourteen years old and requested that he be allowed to stay with the army if his archer friend received an exception, because they were both the same age. Seeing their eagerness, the Messenger allowed the two to stay.

The Messenger ordered 50 archers to stand at the mountain top, instructing, "Keep the Qurayshi cavalry away from us with your arrows and don't let them come against us from the rear, whether the battle goes in our favor or against us. Whatever happens, keep to your places so that we cannot be attacked from your direction, even if you see us being slain or booty being taken."¹¹⁰

The Messenger then unsheathed his weapon, held it up, and asked, "Who will take this sword from me and fight?"

Several of the believers responded enthusiastically, hoping to embrace the honor.

The Messenger added, "Who will take it from me with its right?"

One of the men who rose up was Abu Dujanah, who had a reputation for being fearless in battle. He used to wear a red turban during war, which many called the "turban of death," because wherever they saw it, the opposition died.

Abu Dujanah stepped up, "And what is its right, oh Messenger?"

"That you fight the enemy with it until it breaks or is unserviceable," responded the Messenger.

Abu Dujanah accepted the challenge, "I will take it with that right."¹¹¹

The Messenger passed over the other eager soldiers and handed his sword to Abu Dujanah, who walked very proudly upon being selected.

On the Qurayshi side, Abu Sufyan approached the group responsible for holding up and advancing the army's flag through battle.

He said, "We gave you the flag at Badr but you turned your backs and fled, and you saw what happened as a result. The flag is the symbol of the army. If it stands, the army stands. If it falls, the army falls. So now, either take the flag with the right that it deserves, or if you can't, then give it back to us."

Abu Sufyan's psychological chess worked. Feeling insulted, the group of ten flag bearers responded that they had made a pact and vowed to hold it up firmly in battle.

Abu Sufyan then sent an envoy to the believers urging the Ansar to back down from battle. The Ansar rejected the call and stood united with their believing friends originally from the City. Abu Sufyan then sent a second envoy to the believers. The representative – who had cowardly abandoned his people in Madinah upon the arrival of the faith – had barely identified himself before the Ansar rejected him.

As the two armies stood ready to engage, a Qurayshi warrior stepped out issuing a challenge for an opening bout of one-on-one combat. Ali emerged from the believers. Ali had little protective gear while his opponent was suited with full body armor. The Qurayshi man swung first, and Ali was so fast that he absorbed the blow onto his shield, and without missing a beat, Ali struck below the enemy's thigh, severing part of the leg. His opponent collapsed, and his clothes shifted such that he became naked.

Ali moved in for the close but the Qurayshi man cried out, "I beg you by the rights of kinship, don't kill me!"

Showing mercy, Ali spared the warrior and walked back to the believers. The Qurayshi man died the same day.

Shortly thereafter, the believers charged forward, and the Quraysh could not withstand the onslaught, partially because they were tired after traveling from the City to Mount Uhud. One of the believers who vied unsuccessfully for the sword of the Messenger, looked over at Abu Dujanah's path and saw the red turban rapidly advancing, taking down the Qurayshi forces. He understood that the

Messenger had picked wisely. Abu Dujanah, Ali, and Humza struck down all ten of the enemy flag bearers. The Qurayshi flag dropped down to the ground and the opposition began to flee.

Seeking revenge, a pagan made a deal with a slave that if he killed Humza, he would be set free. At the Battle of Uhud, Humza was fighting with great bravery and inflicted more casualties on the Quraysh than any other believer.

The slave said, "I was watching Humza while he was killing men with his sword. I...aimed my spear until I was sure it would hit the mark and threw it with the most force that I could. It entered from behind and came out in front. Humza turned around to try to fight me, but before he could raise his sword, he collapsed. I left him there until he died, then I came and took back my spear. Then I went back to the camp because I did not want to kill anyone but him. My only aim in killing him was to gain my freedom."^{112,113}

After Humza was killed, Hind – wife of Abu Sufyan – did something unthinkable. She took out a dagger, mutilated his body, and ripped out Humza's liver, attempting to eat it. Hind then cut off his fingers and attached them to a necklace.^{114,115}

Hind beat her drum and egged on the Qurayshi men, reciting poetry,

"If you advance, we hug you,
spread soft rugs beneath you;
if you retreat, we leave you.

Leave and no more love for you."

Abu Dujanah said, "I saw someone urging the enemy on, shouting wildly, and I made for him, but when I lifted my sword against him he screamed, and I saw that it was a woman [Hind]; I respected the Messenger's sword too much to use it on a woman."

The believers were so effective in their offensive that the cheerleading women – who were standing behind the enemy's position – lifted their skirts and retreated, running up the mountain.

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The believers were so effective in their offensive that the cheerleading women – who were standing behind the enemy's position – lifted their skirts and retreated, running up the mountain.

As the Qurayshi army withdrew and ran away, they left behind valuable weapons, animals, and all types of booty in their wake, laying invitingly to be collected off the battlefield. Seeing the scene unfold from their perch on the smaller mountain for some time, the forty archers descended from their positions and went after the booty. The leader of the archers confronted the running men, warning them not to disobey the Messenger's order to remain in position no matter what. Tempted by the imported weapons, abandoned camels, and tents, eventually forty abandoned their posts and went to the war spoils. The believers had become spread out beyond the narrow stretch of land where the Messenger had initially situated them at the beginning of the battle. As the warriors thought the battle was over, they disarmed and put their weapons away to better collect booty.

The Qurayshi cavalry had been hiding in a ravine at a distance from Mount Uhud, but then retreated slowly as the tide overwhelmed their ground forces. The savvy leader of the cavalry, Khalid – son of Walid – kept looking over his shoulder and noticed that the archers had left their positions. Cleverly, he instructed his men to turn around, and they immediately broke into a gallop, heading to the battlefield.

The Messenger saw the cavalry reinforcements approaching and called in a loud voice, "Oh believers, behind you! Take precaution!"

This was a brave and selfless deed, as he had revealed his position on the field! As Commander in Chief, he was the prime target for the enemy.

The hooves of the war horses thundered forward, and the cavalry struck down ten of the archers still on the small mountain in addition to the stray archers collecting war booty on the field. By disobeying the Messenger, the greedy archers did not get the war spoils; instead many lost their lives in humiliation. In that moment, they had chosen this life over the hereafter. Having executed a successful surprise attack, Khalid dispatched a man to gather up the remaining Qurayshi warriors and launched a counteroffensive from two sides against the believers, causing the momentum of the battle to shift. In the heightened chaos, some of the believers withdrew from the battle, escaping up the mountain.

The Quraysh managed to split the army of the believers, causing them to face each other. Humiliated at the previous Battle of Badr, Satan came to Uhud, sowing confusion amongst the ranks.

Satan tricked some of the believers as he said, "The enemy is right there!"

In response, the believers mistakenly attacked a fellow warrior who they did not recognize and who had just appeared late to the battlefield. He was an old man with poor eyesight. His son, Hudhayfah, would later be nicknamed the "keeper of secrets" because the Messenger would confide in him and share the names of the hypocrites. Recognizing his father from afar, his son cried out for his friends to stop. Unfortunately, the father died from his wounds. Later on, the believers who had killed his father by accident came to Hudhayfah and asked him for forgiveness, which he did. With his sense of justice, the Messenger paid him the blood money of 100 camels, which was a fortune. Hudhayfah in turn, gave it all away to the poor in charity.

Back in the heat of the conflict, a Qurayshi warrior exclaimed, "I am going to kill the Praiseworthy!"

The man charged toward the believers and Musab, who had a physical resemblance to the Messenger and was wearing a borrowed cloak from the Messenger. The Qurayshi cut off Musab's right hand that was holding the flag of the believers. Despite the excruciating pain, Musab picked the flag up with his left hand only for it to be cut off too. He courageously picked the flag back up with the stubs of his forearms only to receive a blow which made him a martyr.

The Qurayshi warrior started to shout loudly, "The Praiseworthy has been killed! The Praiseworthy has been killed!"

Assuming that the Messenger had been killed, many of the Quraysh believed they had fulfilled their mission and walked away from the field.

Observing that some of his friends were sitting down in despair, one of the more courageous believers, Anas, asked, "Why aren't you fighting? The enemy is still here."

They responded, "Haven't you heard? The Messenger has been killed."

Anas responded, "Brothers! Even if the Messenger has been killed, The Majestic has not been killed. Besides, if the Messenger has been killed what will your lives be worth without him? Don't think about living or dying. Fight for The Majestic. Get up and die the way the Messenger died!"^{116,117}

Anas said, "Oh Saad ibn Muadh, verily I can smell the fragrance of Paradise from behind the mountains of Uhud."

Inspired, several of the believers returned to battle, and some of them were martyred. Anas also fought valiantly and met his end on the field. He incurred more than eighty wounds, making his body unrecognizable. It was not until his sister arrived that she identified him by his fingertips.

Meanwhile, the Messenger was actually still alive and with nine of the most ardent believers. Their backs were against the wall of Uhud. The red turbaned Abu Dujanah tried to protect the Messenger with his body and was hit with many arrows intended for the Messenger. Another of the believers, Talha, incurred seventy wounds shielding the Messenger from the Qurayshi battle attacks. The Messenger would later call him a "walking martyr," as he survived the Battle of Uhud despite being so severely injured.

The infamous pagan that had dumped the heavy camel intestines onto the Messenger's back in the City years ago appeared on the battlefield. While on his horse, he faced the Messenger. The Messenger jumped to grab a spear from his friend. The pagan rushed forward and lowered his weapon. The Messenger dodged the attack, simultaneously pierced his enemy's armor with the spear, and slightly cut the pagan's neck, which proved to be lethal.

A believer observed in awe, "I saw the Messenger on the day of Uhud and there were two people in front of him wearing the whitest of white and fighting a fight that I had never seen before. I had never seen them before or after that incident."¹¹⁸

Although the Messenger was being protected from the unseen realm by angels, he still sustained several wounds in the heat of the battle. A Qurayshi horseman galloped toward the Messenger,

possessed to strike him down. Though Talha deflected most of the blow with his shield, the enemy sword hit the Messenger's helmet, causing a wound on his cheek.

Another Qurayshi man threw rocks at the Messenger, one of which cut his lip, causing it to bleed. An enemy arrow pierced the Messenger's armor, ripped through his cheek, and chipped his tooth. The arrow remained lodged. Blood streamed down his face and onto his beard. The Messenger was in pain. Nobody's station or position – not even that of the Messenger – is raised in this life or the hereafter except through trials, tribulation, tests, pain, patience, struggle, suffering, and sacrifice.¹¹⁹

Seven of the nine believers were martyred as they slowed down the Quraysh from coming near their leader. Although Talha had incurred an unfathomable number of wounds, he was one of the last ones left to help the injured Messenger retreat into a small cave on Mount Uhud. Despite his condition, the Messenger handed arrows to an archer who launched them down at the enemy.

When the Messenger raised his head to look at the enemy, Talha implored, "O Messenger of The Majestic! Let my parents be sacrificed for your sake! Please don't raise your head and make it visible, lest an arrow of the enemy should hit you. Let my neck and chest be wounded instead of yours."¹²⁰

Several of the believing warriors figured out where the Messenger was and ran to protect him. An Ansari man, Qatada, arrived, and protected the Messenger from stray arrows until one struck his eye.

Tears streaming down his face, the Messenger supplicated, "Oh Majestic One, Qatada has protected Your Messenger with his face. So let his eye become the best eye, and let it be the most precise in eyesight."

The Messenger removed the arrow. Miraculously, Qatada's eye healed that instant and had the stronger vision of his two eyes.¹²¹

Abu Bakr, Umar, Ali, and other believers ran up the mountain to join the Messenger. Seeing the arrow lodged in their leader's cheek, Abu Bakr wanted to pull it out. However, another believer was so

eager to help that he bit the arrow with his own teeth to gently remove it. He bit so hard that a few of the believer's teeth fell out.

Sensing that they had won the battle, a Qurayshi man went to locate their leader, Abu Sufyan.

Abu Sufyan shouted out, "Is the Praiseworthy alive? Answer me!"

The Messenger instructed Abu Bakr and Umar, "Don't answer him."

Abu Sufyan cried out to ask if Abu Bakr was alive. The believers ignored him. He then asked if Umar was alive. Once again, the believers stayed silent.

Abu Sufyan rejoiced, "We have killed all of them!"

Umar could not help himself and shouted out, "You are lying, enemy of The Majestic! For verily The Majestic has caused all of them to live, and they will remain to harm you on another day."

Abu Sufyan said loudly, "Victory in war goes by turns –today in exchange for Badr! You shall find amongst the dead mutilation. I did not command them to do this, but I am not angry with it either."^{122,123}

Umar shouted back, "You are a liar! This is not for Badr. We are not equal. Our dead are in Paradise and your dead are in Hell!"

Abu Sufyan proclaimed that their main idol had been honored.

The Messenger instructed, "Answer him back."

The believers responded, "The Majestic is Higher and has more Honor."

Abu Sufyan voiced that they also had another major idol and the believers did not.

The Messenger repeated, "Answer him back."

"The Majestic will protect us," the believers said, "and you have no protector."

Whereas the Quraysh had lost 22 people, the believers suffered 70 casualties from this battle and almost everyone else was wounded in some way. Many of the Quraysh also suffered wounds. Aishah and Fatimah – both from the Messenger's family – and several Ansari women came to Uhud to care for the wounded and give the believers water.

The believers buried the fallen warriors in order of how much knowledge each had of the Book. Although Musab had been one of the wealthiest men in the City before accepting the faith, he died poor and was only wearing one garment. When his friends tried to cover his lower body, the top half was exposed. If instead they covered his upper body, the lower half was naked. They placed the garment on his upper body and utilized dry desert plants to cover his lower half.

As foreseen in his wife's dream, Hanzalah had also been martyred when he attempted to approach Abu Sufyan in battle. He died in an impure state, because he had been intimate with his wife and did not have a chance to purify himself with water before rushing to join the army.

Although martyrs' bodies are not washed before burial, the Messenger said, "I saw the angels washing the body of Hanzalah."¹²⁴

The Messenger found the body of his fallen uncle Humza, and as tears streamed down his face, he said, "There will never be a moment as sad for me as this."¹²⁵

Humza's sister came to the battlefield grieved that her brother had died. She wanted to go see his body, but given how badly it had been mutilated, the Messenger forbade her from doing so. Humza's sister had brought two shrouds for Humza and handed it to her son. Given the shortage, Humza was dressed with one and a martyred Ansari was fitted with the other before they were buried.

The Majestic revealed, "Never think of those who have been killed in the cause of The Majestic as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Master..."¹²⁶

After the burials were complete, the Messenger gathered the army on the battlefield, made a supplication, and said, "I guarantee that I will testify for every one of them on the Day of Judgment."

Boosting morale, he stated, "The martyr will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment. His wounds will still be as fresh as the day he was killed and the sight will be that of blood but the smell will be that of perfume."¹²⁷

While many in Madinah mourned the fallen warriors, others celebrated the believers' loss. The hypocrites insulted the Messenger on this misfortune at the Battle of Uhud. They jeered at the believers and murmured snide comments among themselves.

They said, "How can a Messenger of The Majestic be defeated by pagan, idol-worshippers? Had the Messenger been a true messenger, he would not have suffered that defeat. He is no more than an ambitious adventurer who seeks a kingdom. As such, he sometimes wins and sometimes loses."¹²⁸

Upon returning, the Messenger requested that a vanguard of volunteers – who had also participated at Uhud – ensure that the Quraysh would not return. Ali was amongst 70 men who answered the call that Sunday and set out.

Advising Ali, the Messenger said, "See in the distance what they are riding. If they are riding horses and have left their camels, this means they are going to come back to Madinah. If they are riding their camels and have left their horses, then they are going back to the City."¹²⁹

A sympathetic elder leader, named Mabad, from the desert tribe of Khuzaah, learned of the vulgar, treacherous behavior the Quraysh had exhibited at Uhud.

Although a pagan, Mabad visited the Messenger in Madinah to express his sympathy, "We heard what happened to you and your friends. Know that I am not pleased by this. I would rather that the other group was inflicted with the loss and defeat."

On the return trip to the City, the Qurayshi army debated within their ranks whether or not to return to Madinah. They had not completed their objective to eliminate the believers. Furthermore with the Messenger and his friends still relatively intact, Qurayshi trade caravans would still not be safe from attacks on the Peninsula.

The son of Abu Jahl passionately appealed, "Neither did we kill the Praiseworthy, nor have we pleased our young ladies."

Another Qurayshi nobleman added that the believers would rally additional men and thirst for vengeance, given that their martyrs had been brutally mutilated.

When Ali and the believers marched outside of Madinah, they observed the Quraysh riding camels instead of horses, which was a relief. On Monday, the Messenger brought a second contingent of warriors to strengthen the mission. As was his custom, the Messenger, along with Ali, Abu Bakr, and his friends, camped for three days to ensure that the enemy did not return. The believers also lit fires at a distance which made their numbers look much larger than they actually were, striking fear into the hearts of opposition scouts.

After leaving Madinah, Mabad serendipitously crossed paths with the Quraysh.

Abu Sufyan recognized him and inquired, "Tell me; how did you leave the Praiseworthy and his friends?"

Mabad exaggerated, "They are fuming with anger, and the people who did not fight, now they are all going to fight. They are now lighting the fire of war, and they are beating the drums of vengeance. They have promised themselves they are not going to enjoy peace until they extract vengeance for what you have done to them."

Abu Sufyan asked, "What do you advise we do?"

Mabad said, "I advise you to flee as fast as your horses will take you."

Moved by what they heard, the Quraysh continued with their journey back to the City.

23. Triple Treachery

A respected chief, named Abu Bara, from the land of Najd visited the Messenger in Madinah. The Messenger tried to persuade his visitor to embrace the faith, but he was not able to. Abu Bara suggested instead that a group of highly knowledgeable believers be sent to share the message with the tribes in Najd. To put any concerns of safety to rest, he extended his personal protection to such a delegation. The Messenger agreed and dispatched 70 believers who had lived in the place of prayer, known for their recitation of the Book and for delivering water to the Ansar at night.

After the group had traveled a distance, they sent a letter from the Messenger via an envoy for delivery to Ibn al-Tufayl, an arrogant leader of a local sub-tribe. Although Ibn al-Tufayl knew that his uncle, Abu Bara, had extended his protection to the group of believers, he made an eye motion to one of his cronies to eliminate the envoy without reading the letter. This was a triple treachery because diplomats are never to be harmed according to international norms, the

envoy had immunity from a chieftain of Najd, and the motion to kill was done covertly.

As the envoy stood waiting to be summoned, Ibn al-Tufayl's crony rushed from behind and thrust a spear from the believer's back all the way through the front.

Realizing that he had been martyred, the envoy exclaimed, "I won, by the Lord of the Sanctuary!"

The afterlife was clearly on his mind.

Devoid of morality, Ibn al-Tufayl recruited three armed sub-tribes and marched on the remaining travelers from Madinah. Upon surrounding the outnumbered believers, Ibn al-Tufayl and his forces attacked with their weapons. The travelers had come prepared to spread the message of peace, not to fight in battle. Although they defended themselves valiantly, all but three of the believers were murdered in cold blood. While one of them was wounded and pinned underneath a pile of corpses, the other two were just returning from an errand when they saw vultures encircling their area. Sensing that something was amiss, they discussed what should be done and decided to continue forward. It was not long after they encountered the blood bath that Ibn al-Tufayl's gang turned on them. The Ansari man fought bravely, killing two men from the enemy before he too was slain. The remaining survivor, Ibn Umayyah, was taken prisoner. After being humiliated, he was released.

On the way back, Ibn Umayyah encountered two men from the sub-tribe of Ibn al-Tufayl who had not been involved with the massacre and were instead returning from Madinah. Ibn Umayyah doubted their intentions, devastated after seeing his friends all murdered by Ibn al-Tufayl's gang. They sat under some shade until night fall. Frazzled from narrowly escaping death at the hands of Ibn al-Tufayl's crew, the survivor killed the two men when they fell asleep. Searching the bodies afterward, he did a double take when he then found a letter in their belongings that was from the Messenger, extending his protection to them. Ibn Umayyah realized that he had made a huge mistake.

He then returned to Madinah and informed the Messenger of the tragedy that had occurred in Najd, and what he had done

subsequently. This was the worst massacre during the life of the Messenger. On the same night that he was informed of the loss of almost 70 friends, he also learned that another ten believers on a separate mission had perished in a different surprise attack. The Messenger was greatly grieved by the unexpected news, and for one month he supplicated to The Majestic at least five times a day for the salvation of the martyrs and to punish the perpetrators. Although his community had suffered heavier losses, the Messenger honestly sent the blood money and condolences to the families of the two men who had been mistakenly killed by Ibn Umayyah.

Meanwhile, Ibn al-Tufayl became afflicted by a terrible form of leprosy that spread through his body. His family and sub-tribe abandoned him. Delusional, Ibn al-Tufayl suffered a miserable and lonely death.

24. Plot Exposed

Leveraging the Constitution of Madinah, the Messenger went to the Jewish tribe of al-Nadir to ask that they contribute toward the blood money – 200 camels – for the two innocent men who had been slain by Ibn Umayyah. Outside of a fortress surrounded by large date palm groves south of Madinah, the chiefs of al-Nadir showed respect and expressed a willingness to fulfill the request.

A member of al-Nadir said, “It is about time that you came to us for our help!”

They signaled to the Messenger that they needed some time to prepare some food before they could invite him in. Thus, the Messenger along with his friends, Abu Bakr, Umar, and Ali, sat outside waiting.

Some in al-Nadir argued with each other and said, “You will never find the man as easy prey as he is now. Let a strong person go onto the roof of the house next to which the Praiseworthy is sitting and drop a large stone or rock over his head and rid us of him.”¹³⁰

Not too long ago, one of their prominent members – Kab ibn al-Ashraf – had been put to death by the believers for his grave treachery against the believers, for provocation of the Quraysh against Madinah, and for his assassination attempt against the Messenger. Despite his crimes, the loss of Kab ibn al-Ashraf weighed heavily on his sub-tribe.

The Jews of al-Nadir decided to carry out the assassination and sent a volunteer to the roof. Angel Gabriel descended down immediately to expose the plot to the Messenger. The Messenger got up that instant and walked away. His friends as well as the Jews of al-Nadir waited for him to return, but he did not. Abu Bakr, Umar, and Ali wondered where their leader was. They left the fortress to search for him and were tipped off by a man that the Messenger had returned to Madinah. Upon reuniting, he told them that The Majestic had exposed the assassination attempt perpetrated by the Jews of al-Nadir.

The Messenger sent a representative to the tribe of al-Nadir to convey, "Betake yourselves out of my city [Madinah]. You are no longer allowed to share it with me now that you have plotted your treacherous action against me. I give you ten days' notice to carry out this ultimatum. Any of you seen after this period in Madinah shall be executed."

They were shocked at how the Messenger had learned of their plot so quickly and tried to argue with the representative. Embarrassed, the Jews of al-Nadir then agreed to the ultimatum.

When the news reached Ibn Ubayy, the most notorious of the hypocrites, he advised the tribe of al-Nadir to not leave their fortresses. Ibn Ubayy made an oath that he would extend his protection and raise an army of 2,000 men from his allies to fight alongside al-Nadir against the believers if the situation worsened.

"If you are expelled," he said, "I will be with you walking away from Madinah as well."¹³¹

At this, The Majestic revealed, "The Majestic is Witness, that they verily, are liars. Surely, if they (the Jews) are expelled, never will they (hypocrites) go out with them, and if they are attacked, they will never help them. And if they do help them, they (hypocrites) will turn their backs, so they will not be victorious."¹³²

Nevertheless, influenced by Ibn Ubayy's assurances, the main al-Nadir chief sent a representative to the Messenger.

He said, "We are not prepared to evacuate our homes. We will resist any attempt to evacuate us. You can do as you please."

The Messenger responded, "The Majestic is the Greatest!"

The believers in Madinah echoed the same phrase. On that same day, the Messenger and 700 men armed themselves, marched, and reached the fortresses to lay siege. The tribe of al-Nadir was surprised at the speed at which the believers had reacted and traveled. Terrified, the Jews ran into their fortresses and waited for Ibn Ubayy to make good on his promise, but The Majestic's revelation is true; Ibn Ubayy and his allies never came. Ibn Ubayy was as reliable as Satan. It then became a matter of time before the Jews of al-Nadir would exhaust their supplies. The Messenger ordered that a group of the army continue the siege while he took a contingent of warriors to the third Jewish tribe of Qurayzah to reconfirm their treaty with them. The tribe of Qurayzah renewed their oaths and did not come to the aid of the al-Nadir Jews.

As the believers began to be further trained in war, the Messenger entreated them to not kill women, children, or the elderly. He taught them not to chop down fruit trees, not to destroy residences, not to take the lives of cattle except if needed for food, and not to burn or scatter bees.¹³³

The siege of al-Nadir dragged on, and the Jews were running out of resources. For the sake of the people and as a mercy, the Messenger wished that the siege would end. The Majestic then revealed an exception to the rule. During this specific conflict, the Messenger and believers were commanded to cut down some groups of date palms. The Jews cried and wailed as some of their crops fell, egging them over the edge to unconditionally surrender. Neither side suffered casualties. The siege was over.

The Messenger did not exact revenge for the attempted assassination and instead showed mercy. He allowed the Jews of al-Nadir to leave safely with their women and children. While a few of them embraced the faith and were permitted to keep their land and belongings, the majority rejected the message and were expelled. The

Messenger permitted the al-Nadir Jews to take as much of their jewels, fine brocades, wealth, and belongings as their camels could carry. Many of them even took their exquisite doors! They were, however, forbidden to take their weapons and lost their agricultural lands. Before leaving, several of the Jews of al-Nadir took axes and destroyed their homes, which were known for their sophisticated architecture. They journeyed to either Syria or Khaybar, both of which also had Jewish fortresses.

Given that no fighting had occurred during the siege, the Messenger distributed the confiscated property primarily to the impoverished emigrants who had come from the City as well as to two poor Ansari men. This allowed the emigrants to establish their own residences and manage their own properties apart from those of the Ansar, who had thus far given them shelter and generously shared their wealth for years.

Before the surrender, while the believers were camped outside of the al-Nadir fortresses, The Majestic revealed, "O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, sacrificing on stone alters to other than The Majestic, and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan; so avoid it that you may be successful. Satan only wants to cause between you animosity and hatred through intoxicants and gambling and to avert you from the remembrance of The Majestic and from prayer. So will you not desist?"¹³⁴

One of the believers, Abu Talha, was at his home when this order prohibiting alcoholic drinks was revealed. The Messenger asked somebody to announce the latest development across Madinah.

Abu Talha said to his butler, "Go out and see what this voice is saying."

Upon coming back, the butler said, "There is somebody announcing that alcoholic beverages have been prohibited."¹³⁵

Abu Talha declared, "Go and spill all the wine."

Merchants who were transporting entire caravans of alcohol for sale also received the news. Without questioning the latest

guidance from The Majestic or how it might impact them financially, they dumped out these beverages onto the streets of Madinah.

Rivers of wine and alcohol flowed through the streets of Madinah and drained into the sand.

25. Transformation

A spy of the Messenger reached the pool South of Madinah, on the banks of which the tribe of al-Mustalaq had settled. The tribe was allied with the Quraysh and had in their midst one of the three main pagan idols on the Peninsula.

The spy of the Messenger located al-Harith, the leader of al-Mustalaq, and casually offered, "You are launching an attack against Madinah, and I would like to join in order to get some of the booty."

The believers had been disrupting Qurayshi caravans that other tribes benefited from economically. Al-Harith planned to surprise attack Madinah, vengeful and eager to pounce on the town's newfound resources. When believing scouts discovered the news and informed the Messenger, he thought it prudent to confirm the rumor by sending a relatively anonymous believer as a spy. Al-Harith agreed to allow the stranger to join his group, finding kinship in his seeming animosity to the Messenger and desire to share in the war spoils. Confirming

what he had been sent for, by nightfall the spy returned to Madinah and confirmed that the threat was real.

The Messenger immediately rallied hundreds of believers for battle. Given that the element of surprise was now in the Messenger's favor and chances of victory were very high, many of the hypocrites—including Ibn Ubayy—also joined, driven by greed for spoils.

Directly after the morning prayer, at sunrise, the Messenger and his army marched on the tribe of al-Mustalaq. The opposition was completely unprepared and surprised when they saw the armed believers coming toward them. They surrendered without much fighting and few casualties. The believers took possession of approximately 1,000 captives, 2,000 camels, and 5,000 sheep.

Although al-Harith had fled, his daughter, Juwayria, was among the captives and was assigned to an Ansari household. Savvy and capable, she negotiated the purchase of her own freedom.

Aishah, one of the wives of the Messenger, said, "She [Juwayria] was very sweet and very beautiful. No one saw her except that he was captivated by her beauty. She came knocking on the door of the Messenger, asking for help monetarily to get her freedom. As soon as I saw her, I hated her because I knew that the Messenger would see in her what I am seeing."

At that point, she entered and said, "Oh Messenger, I am Juwayria, the daughter of al-Harith, the princess of my tribe. You have seen what has happened to me. I have arranged to free myself... So help me in this matter."

Seeing the profound ramifications of her request and beyond the pretty face that Aishah saw, the Messenger responded, "What if I give you something better?"

"What?" Juwayria asked.

He proposed, "I will free you myself and marry you."

Juwayria accepted and joined the Messenger's household, bonding the two tribes of the victor and the vanquished. He paid the Ansari household for her freedom, which became her wedding gift. News spread quickly to the Ansar that the Messenger had married Juwayria, and it dawned on their collective conscience that it was not

befitting to have the Messenger's in-laws as their captives. Thus, in a stunning wave, every single captive from al-Mustalaq was set free. This was unprecedented in the Peninsula.

The Messenger forewarned future generations that outside of the context of war, anyone who buys or sells a free individual into slavery is the worst of humanity and will have the curse of The Majestic upon them.

Without fully knowing what incredible events had transpired, al-Harith returned, intending to negotiate a ransom for his daughter, family, and tribe. The Messenger turned to his princess bride, and gave Juwayria the choice to return back to her father or stay with him. She did not hesitate in wanting to stay with her new husband. Upon seeing that his daughter had chosen the Messenger over him, al-Harith was so moved that he embraced the faith. In a development even more incredible and beautiful than the first, the entire freed tribe of al-Mustalaq accepted the faith. They became devout believers, now equals with their conquerors.

Upon witnessing this miraculous transformation, the Messenger restored al-Harith as the leader of his original tribe and returned all of the wealth that had been seized as war spoils. The believing army of Madinah left the pool of al-Mustalaq exactly as they found it, but with the footprint of the emerging nation state expanded and the faith entering into the hearts of both armies, turned friends. They rode away without a single captive, queued behind the Messenger and Juwayria, a Mother of the Believers.

Aishah reflected and amended her first impression of Juwayria, her now sister in faith, "I don't know of any lady who brought more blessings to her tribe than Juwayria."¹³⁶

Once the Messenger stayed at Juwayria's house for the night and when he left in the morning, she was sitting in a spot, praising The Majestic. When he returned to her later in the day, Juwayria was still in the same area, supplicating.

The Messenger asked, "Have you remained in the same place since the morning prayer?"

"Yes," Juwayria responded.

"Should I not tell you of a remembrance," the Messenger asked, "that if you do it, it will give you all of this reward that you have earned?"

She said, "What?"

He answered, praising, "Glory to The Majestic, according to the number of His creation. Glory to The Majestic, according to what pleases Him. Glory to The Majestic according to the weight of His Throne. Glory to The Majestic according to the ink of His pen."¹³⁷

The faith swept through the Peninsula, cutting down barriers between rival tribes and social classes, bonding once enemies, and uniting warring hearts. Nevertheless, the believers were human beings, imperfect by nature. Some barriers were leveled, and others endured.

In the fifth year following the Messenger's emigration to Madinah, the Messenger's adopted son, Zayd, and Zayd's wife, Zainab, were not getting along. She was the Messenger's cousin and a gem in Madinah. Zainab gave more in charity to the poor than almost any other woman. She fasted often during the day and supplicated sincerely at night. Born to a noble family, however, Zainab valued her fine lineage and could not help but make Zayd conscious of such an artificial distinction as a difference in social class. This put their relationship on the rocks for some time. Despite their differences and her familial pride, Zayd tried to make it work with Zainab because she was a woman of exemplary character. In the end, though, the couple decided to end the marriage and Zayd sought a divorce.

It was in this circumstance that The Majestic revealed to the Messenger, "We gave her [Zainab] to you in marriage, so that there may be no difficulty to the believers in respect of [the marriage of] the wives of their adopted sons, when the latter have no desire to keep them [they have divorced them]. And The Majestic's Command must be fulfilled."¹³⁸

Having placed no restriction on how many wives the Messenger could marry, The Majestic performed the marriage

between the Messenger and Zainab through this revelation. Their marriage contract was eternalized in the Book, which would be read and recited until the end of time. The Messenger followed The Majestic's order, and took Zainab's hand in marriage after she had finalized her divorce with Zayd. The Messenger and Zainab happily became husband and wife.

Zainab confided in the Messenger, "I am proud of three things, none of which can be possessed by any of your other wives: you and I have the same grandfather. And I was married to you by The Majestic, glorified be He, with an order sent down from heaven, and the emissary in our marriage was Angel Gabriel."¹³⁹

26. Vindicated

The Messenger was so warm and considerate to all of his friends, that each felt deep in their heart that they must be the Messenger's favorite.

Basking in the Messenger's radiant smile, one man was so convinced that he must be the most treasured friend of the Messenger, he asked, "Who is the most beloved person to you?"

He was taken aback when the Messenger easily responded, "Aishah."

After the death of his beloved Khadija, the Messenger had a soft spot in his heart for his wife, Aishah. Because she had a natural rouge about her face, the Messenger affectionately called her "the blushing girl." The Messenger loved her so much, he would share eating utensils with her, drink from the same place her lips touched the glass, and eat from the same place she bit off food. As the younger daughter of the Messenger's best friend, Abu Bakr, Aishah was married to the Messenger at a young age. Yet, she was wise beyond her years. Though extraordinarily attractive, she was most well known for her inquisitive, playful, and sharp charisma. Aishah was also renowned for her quick memory, soaking up knowledge like a sponge

absorbing water. Over the course of her life, she narrated numerous sayings and stories from the Messenger, becoming one of the most distinguished scholars of her time.

On a particular occasion, the Messenger and the army were returning from battle and encamped outside of Madinah. Aishah was traveling with him in her own carriage, mounted on top of some camels. She alighted from the carriage to relieve herself and walked out at a distance. As Aishah returned, she realized that her necklace was missing. It was special to her, as it was a gift from the Messenger. In the night, she went back and looked for her missing token but could not find it. Meanwhile, the Messenger had given the command to march on, and the people responsible for mounting Aishah's carriage back onto the camels had done so, assuming she was still in it. By the time she returned to the camp, the caravan had moved on, and she was all alone! The silver lining was that she found her necklace, which had been underneath one of the camels. Aishah decided the best thing to do was to wait for the caravan to come back once they realized she was missing. While sitting in wait under a tree, she dozed off to sleep.

A soldier named Safwan ibn al-Muattal had been sleeping in a different part of the camp when the army had marched on, and he was trying to catch up. As he rode his mount toward Madinah, he came across Aishah.

Aishah woke up hearing Safwan utter, "We all belong to The Majestic and to Him we shall return."

She quickly covered herself with her veil. Out of modesty, Safwan did not engage Aishah in conversation. He allowed Aishah to mount his camel and guided it on foot from the front. They traveled until they caught up with the army, which had set up camp further along to recover from the excessive heat.^{140,141}

Seeing Aishah arrive with Safwan ibn al-Muattal, some of the hypocrites stooped to such a low level as to spread an unthinkable rumor, attacking the honor of both Aishah and Safwan.

Ibn Ubayy remarked, "Your Messenger's wife has spent the whole night with a man, and now she turns up with him leading her camel!"¹⁴²

When they returned to Madinah, Aishah fell ill with a fever for several weeks. Meanwhile, she was unaware that rumors were running rampant about her and Safwan. The Messenger came to visit her, but rather than showing his usual tenderness, Aishah noticed that he only greeted her with peace and asked her how she was doing before leaving. She cried.

One day Aishah ventured out with her aunt.

The elderly lady got frustrated when something got caught in her head dress and she exclaimed, "Woe be upon my son!"

Aishah responded, "Woe be upon what you say! Do you curse people who had participated in [The Battle of] Badr?"

"Innocent woman," her aunt replied, "have you not heard what he said?"

"What did he say?" Aishah asked.

Her aunt filled her in on the rumors and Aishah was shocked. Her illness intensified. She went back to her house, and the Messenger came to greet Aishah.

"How are you?" he asked.

Aishah responded, "Do you permit me to go to my parents' house?"

The Messenger gave her the okay.

Aishah went to her parents' house and asked, "Mother, do you know what the people are talking about?"

"My daughter," her mother responded, "you should not worry. By The Majestic, if there is a beautiful woman who is loved by her husband, and he has co-wives, they talk many a thing about her."

"Hallowed be The Majestic," Aishah said, "what are the people talking about?"

She cried the entire night and wept in the morning too.

The Messenger contemplated what to do. He summoned Ali and the son of Zayd to get their advice.

"Oh Messenger," said the son of Zayd, "they are your wives and we know nothing else about them but good!"

Ali testified, "The Majestic has not put any unnecessary burden upon you. There are a number of women besides her, and if you ask that maidservant, she will tell you the truth."

Following Ali's advice, the Messenger requested Aishah's maidservant to come and provide her observations on the matter as well.

The Messenger asked her, "Did you see anything in Aishah which can cause doubt about her?"

She was very nervous and responded honestly, "By Him who sent you with the truth, I have seen nothing objectionable in her except that she is a young girl, and she falls asleep while kneading the flour and the lamb eats it."

Separately, the Messenger also asked one of his wives, Zainab, about Aishah. As a man trying to solve a personal mystery, he even sought advice from Aishah's co-wife to make an informed opinion on the case.

Zainab responded to her husband about Aishah, "I shall not say anything without hearing with my ears and seeing with my eyes. By The Majestic, I find nothing in her but goodness."

With Aishah away at her parent's house, the Messenger called the people in an assembly and addressed the matter, which Ibn Ubayy and some hypocrites had exasperated in Madinah. The grapevine was getting out of hand.

"Oh gathering of believers," the Messenger said, "who will excuse me from a person who has hurt me in regard to my family? By The Majestic, I find nothing in my wife but goodness, and the person whom the people have mentioned in connection is, according to my knowledge, a thoroughly pious person, and he never came into my house except with me."

"Oh Messenger," Saad ibn Muadh said, "I defend your honor against him! If he belong to my tribe, we will strike his neck, and if he belongs to the other tribe, you order us, and we will comply."

The leader from that other tribe angrily reacted, "By the everlasting existence of The Majestic, you are not telling the truth! You will not be able to kill him, and you will not have the power to do so. Had he been from your tribe, you would never have killed him."

Old tribal and family loyalties ignited, and Saad ibn Muadh's cousin responded, "By the everlasting existence of The Majestic, you are not telling the truth! We will kill him! You are a hypocrite, and so you argue in defense of the hypocrites."

The matter escalated into an uproar apart from the original topic, no longer a defense of Aishah's honor but a competition of tribe against tribe and leader against leader. While both tribes came close to exchanging blows, the Messenger remained at the pulpit and calmed them down until there was peace.

Meanwhile, Aishah spent the entire day weeping and could not even sleep the following night. Feeling sympathetic, both her father, Abu Bakr, and her mother kept her company.

An Ansari woman came by to see Aishah. She felt so bad for her friend that they both broke down into tears together.

The Messenger arrived at Abu Bakr's house and requested permission to enter. After coming in and greeting Aishah, he sat down next to her. The Messenger had not received any new revelations in the past month to clarify Aishah's situation.

The Messenger praised The Majestic, and then said, "Aishah, this is what has reached me about you, and if you are innocent, The Majestic Himself will vindicate your honor, and if accidentally there has been a lapse on your part, seek forgiveness of The Majestic. He will pardon you, for when a servant makes a confession of his fault and turns to Him penitently, The Majestic also turns to him mercifully, accepting his repentance."

Aishah's tears stopped completely, and she said to her father, Abu Bakr, "You give a reply to the Messenger on my behalf."

"By The Majestic," Abu Bakr replied, "I do not know what I should say to the Messenger."

Aishah then turned to her mother, "Give a reply to the Messenger on my behalf!"

“By The Majestic, I do not know what I should say to the Messenger,” her mother also responded.

Aishah gathered up her thoughts and addressed the Messenger herself.

She was young and had not memorized much of The Book as yet, but tried her best to articulate the truth, “By The Majestic, I perceive that you have heard about this and it has settled down in your mind and you have taken it to be true.

“So if I say to you that I am quite innocent, and The Majestic knows that I am innocent, you will never believe me to be true, and if I confess to the alleged lapse, whereas The Majestic knows that I am completely innocent, in that case you will take me to be true, and by The Majestic, I, therefore, find no other alternative for me and for you except that what the father of Joseph said, ‘Patience is most fitting. And The Majestic is the one sought for help against that which you describe.’”

She then laid down on her bed and turned her back to her audience, seeking comfort in the only One – The Majestic – on whom she could truly depend, when her mother, father, and husband could not suffice her in her moment of need. Almost immediately, the Messenger felt the heaviness of revelation coming down from The Majestic. He started perspiring, even though it was winter, and silvery beads of sweat appeared on his skin.

When the revelation had been delivered, the Messenger started laughing out of happiness and said, “Aishah, glad tidings! Verily, The Majestic has vindicated your honor.”

Aishah’s mother was by her daughter’s side and said, “Get up and thank the Messenger!”

Feeling the weight melt off her shoulders, Aishah responded, “I shall not thank him and laud him but thank The Majestic for revealing this.”^{143,144}

Safwan ibn al-Muattal – the righteous man who rescued a stranded Aishah out of the desert – was also found to be innocent. However, the believers who made the mistake of spreading the gossip

were lashed. Finally, Ibn Ubayy and the hypocrites – who were guilty of slander and spreading the rumor – did not get a similar punishment, as not to diminish their agony in the afterlife. Aishah, Mother of the Believers and beloved wife of the Messenger, regained her status in Madinah and remains, until this day, defended by The Majestic in The Book.

27. Intense Sandstorm

One year had elapsed since the Battle of Uhud. Abu Sufyan began to worry that he would not be able to keep the promise he made for a rematch against the believers. The Quraysh had suffered a bad year and had not been able to feed their livestock sufficiently.

Abu Sufyan bribed a man named Nuaym to try to convince the Messenger not to show up to Badr, attempting to deceive him that the Quraysh had gathered up huge numbers which the believers should fear.

This only served to have the opposite effect on the believers, as The Majestic revealed, "Men said to them, 'A great army is gathering against you, so fear them.' But it only increased their Faith; they said, 'For us The Majestic suffices. And He is the best disposer of affairs.'"¹⁴⁵

1,500 believers and the Messenger prepared themselves to go back to Badr. When they arrived at the battlefield, the Quraysh were nowhere to be seen. The believers made the most of the opportunity by sacrificing animals for the sake of The Majestic and enjoyed

themselves, as they participated in a local fair. News spread that the Quraysh had abandoned their promise, and a deep embarrassment seeped into the City.

After the Jewish tribe of al-Nadir had been expelled for its assassination attempt on the Messenger, they were humiliated and furious about losing so much of their land. They decided to get even and traveled to the City to meet with the Qurayshi leaders, including Abu Sufyan. The Jews of al-Nadir and Khaybar offered to supply their wealth to the Quraysh so that they could join forces and raise an army that could strike and extinguish the Messenger and the believers. They went into the Sanctuary and made an oath against the Messenger.

"You are coming to us to fight against the Praiseworthy," Abu Sufyan said. "No doubt, anyone who fights against him, is a friend of ours. Whose religion is closer to your religion – our religion or his religion?"

The Jews of the sub-tribes responded, "You are more rightly guided than them and you are closer to the truth than they are."

United by their hatred for the faith, several other tribes across the Peninsula decided to join forces with the Quraysh and the Jewish sub-tribes to march toward Madinah against the Messenger. One of the largest nomadic tribes was promised half of the agricultural produce from Khaybar for one year, which enticed them to join as mercenaries.

The Messenger's Uncle, Al-'Abbas, was still residing in the City and sent advance warning to the Messenger that the Quraysh had amassed an unprecedented army with cavalry and would arrive at Madinah within a week.

Upon receiving word, the Messenger met with his closest friends to strategize. Amongst the group was Salman the Persian, an elderly believer who was previously enslaved and won his freedom with the help of the Messenger. Extremely intelligent and with an excellent drive to learn, Salman was a valuable asset to the Messenger and the believers in Madinah.

Since the Quraysh and their confederates would be bringing cavalry, Salman suggested, "In Persia, when we feared horse people,

we would dig trenches. This would prevent the horses from getting to our troops.”

The Messenger agreed with the novel approach and supervised the effort. He, along with 3,000 of the believers, worked day and night to dig a large trench just outside of Madinah. To the East and West, Madinah was protected by semi-porous volcanic rock, which was very difficult for an army to march across. The Southern border had lush date palms which were too dense for a group of soldiers to prudently pass through. Thus, three sides of Madinah were naturally secured, leaving the Northern side to protect.

Digging the trench was especially difficult because they did not have any machines to help. It was a time of drought and food was scarce. Their meals consisted of dry barley mixed with oil. Sometimes all that was left were pits of dates to suck on for some minimal nutrients. Also, during this time of year, the nights were cold in the winter. Salman the Persian was diligently at work and everyone there felt a close bond with him.

Because Salman was recently freed and now living in Madinah, the Ansar said, “Salman is one of us.”

The emigrants from the City claimed him as well, saying, “No, Salman is one of us!”

The Messenger said fondly, “He is from our family.”

Salman the Persian had previously been a Christian. Upon the advice of a monk, he emigrated to Madinah. He had recognized the Messenger by a beautiful, raised birthmark which was the size of a pigeon egg and symmetrically situated between his shoulder blades. It was the seal of the Last Messenger, predicted by Moses and Jesus. The other sign that Salman had been given was that the Messenger would not take charity but would accept gifts.

Salman was at the time, however, a slave to an influential Jew in Madinah. He yearned to join the cause of the believers and to gain the reward promised by The Majestic, but was unable to do so fully because of his bondage.

The Jewish owner set a condition for Salman’s freedom from slavery, which was that 300 date palms not only be planted on his land, but also bear fruit. When informed of his plight, the Messenger asked Salman to dig all the holes for this request. Young palm shoots were then brought over and the Messenger himself planted all of them into the holes that Salman had dug. Within one year, 299 of the date palms miraculously gave fruit except for only one plant.

Looking at the sickly plant, the Messenger inquired, “What is wrong with that one?”

A believer and good friend, Umar, exclaimed, “I planted that one!”

The lagging date palm was removed. The Messenger then planted one more with his hands, which then bore fruit. Salman was set free and gleefully joined the ranks of the believers.

Back at the trench, as they dug and carried the earth on their shoulders, the Messenger said, “O Majestic One! There is no life except the life of the Hereafter, so please forgive the Ansar and the emigrants...”¹⁴⁶

Joining in, the believers responded in tune, “We are the ones who gave you our oath...”

The Messenger chanted while digging, “Oh Majestic One, were it not for You, we would not be guided nor would we give charity nor would we pray. So send your peace upon us and make our feet firm when the enemies come to us. Verily the enemies have transgressed upon us. When they want affliction, we refuse to listen to them.”

The believers responded back in unison, “We refuse to listen to them.”

The Messenger had been doing what few men could do. He was simultaneously a spiritual leader, military commander, head of a nation state, husband, father, and marriage counselor. On an average day outside of war periods, the Messenger would devote a third of his time to worship, a third to the government and community, and a third to his family.

Much of the land that was being dug was rocky. When the believers hit a particularly difficult spot, the Messenger poured water over it, made a supplication, and it miraculously turned to sand before their very eyes!

They then came to a massive rock, wanting to split it. Several warriors came into the trench to try to break it down but were not able to. The Messenger requested the axe.

He then said, "In the name of The Majestic; The Majestic is the Greatest."

The Messenger struck the rock once and one-third of it crumbled.

He said, "The Majestic is the Greatest! I have just seen that The Majestic has given me the keys to Syria. By The Majestic, I can see the red castles in Syria."

The Messenger hit the rock again and another one-third of it broke off.

He said, "The Majestic is the Greatest! I have been given the keys to Persia, and I can see the white pillars of its capital."

The Messenger struck the rock one more time and the last of it crumbled.

He said, "The Majestic is the Greatest! I have been given the keys to Yemen. I swear by The Majestic, I can see its doors from this station of mine."¹⁴⁷

In the not too distant future, all of these predications came true as the believers conquered these lands, one after another.

With very little available to eat, the believers would tie a stone pressed to their stomach to suppress the hunger. Down in the trench with them, the Messenger raised his cloak and showed the believers that he had tied two stones to his stomach because he felt the same! He was sweating, and his chest hair was saturated with dust from the continuous labor.

One of the believers, Jabir, said, "O Messenger! Allow me to go home."

The Messenger granted his request although they were still digging the trench.

Jabir said to his wife, "I saw the Messenger in a state that I cannot treat lightly. Have you got something for him to eat?"

She replied, "I have barley and a goat."

Jabir slaughtered the goat, and she ground the barley. Then they put the meat in the earthenware cooking pot.

Jabir went to the Messenger and whispered, "I have got a little food prepared; so get up O Messenger, you and one or two men along with you for the food."

The Messenger asked, "How much is that food?"

Jabir told him about it.

The Messenger said, "It is abundant and good. Tell your wife not to remove the earthenware pot from the fire and not to take out any bread from the oven until I reach there."

Then the Messenger called to all of the believers digging the trench to get up and walk to Jabir's house for a meal.

When Jabir came to his wife, he said, "The Majestic's mercy be upon you! The Messenger came along with the believers and those who were present with them."

She said, "Did the Messenger ask you how much food you had?"

"Yes," he replied.

Jabir's wife trusted the Messenger's judgment and was not overly worried about feeding the army.

Then the Messenger said to the believers, "Enter and do not throng."

The Messenger started cutting the bread into pieces and put the cooked meat over it. He placed some of his saliva in the earthenware pot and covered it while supplicating to The Majestic to bless their food. He gave the food to his fellow warriors and took the meat out of the pot. He went on cutting the bread and scooping the meat for ten

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soldiers at a time until the entire army miraculously ate its fill, and even then, some food remained!

Then the Messenger turned to Jabir's wife and said, "Eat and present to others as the people are struck with hunger."¹⁴⁸

The believers returned to the trench and finally finished digging it on the sixth day. It stretched approximately 1.2 miles long and 13 feet wide in many spans.

The Messenger instructed that the women and children in Madinah be gathered and sent to an Ansari fortress for safety. Should something unexpected transpire, their families would be protected.

The Quraysh and their confederates arrived with a total of 10,000 men and several hundred horses and camels. Although Abu Sufyan continued as the prime chieftain of the Quraysh, each tribe outside of the City had its own leader. While they had come together under the cause to extinguish the faith, their hearts were disunited.

The confederates started pitching their tents, deep in preparation for the impending confrontation. As the reality of the situation set in, the believers were once again outnumbered by a factor greater than 3 to 1.

The enemy mercenaries sent an emissary to the believers to offer that they would return home if they received one-third of the produce of Madinah for a year. Driven by greed, they were more than willing to betray the confederates. The Messenger convened his trusted friends and sought their advice. The believers stayed true to principle and decided to turn down the proposition.

In the fifth year following the Messenger's emigration to Madinah, the Battle of the Trench commenced. With the believers positioned defensively across the length of the trench, the Qurayshi cavalry tried to make a charge but they could not breach the perimeter. The archers allied with the Messenger shot their arrows at the Qurayshi horses, wounding them.

At night, several of the believers patrolled the trench with torches and made their presence known, repeatedly shouting, "The Majestic is the Greatest!"

This effectively deterred the confederates from launching attacks in the cover of darkness. The constant all day and all night vigilance of the situation made this battle the most tiring of any that the believers had experienced. The Messenger also participated diligently at the front line. The believers set up tents on their side of the trench, taking turns going in to energize and warm themselves up.

Witnessing the gridlock, the leader of the Jewish tribe of al-Nadir told Abu Sufyan that he would meet with the Jewish tribe of Qurayzah, which still upheld its treaty with the Messenger in Madinah. Standing outside the door of Qurayzah's fortress, he tried to convince the tribe to turn on the Messenger with no avail. Employing emotional blackmail and persistence, he confidently emphasized the size of the confederate army. The tribe finally caved into treachery, tearing up their original treaty with the Messenger.

The Qurayzah sent two operatives with orders to slaughter the believers' women and children. Inside the Ansari fortress, the aunt of the Messenger heard whispers coming from the outside. She first went to the only man present in the fortress and asked him to defend them. He had volunteered for this particular role because he always had an anxiety with fighting and could not bring himself to do it. Thus, the aunt of the Messenger disguised herself in a male cloak, placed a dagger in her mouth, and climbed down the walls of the fortress. In the darkness of the night, she surprise attacked one of the operatives who was climbing up a rope and beheaded him. When the head fell to the ground, the second operative let out a shriek and fled. The believing women and children had been saved.¹⁴⁹

Meanwhile, the Messenger sent a senior delegation to the tribe of Qurayzah and it was clear from their conversation that the treaty had been broken. The delegation returned and discretely signaled the news to the Messenger.

He exclaimed, "The Majestic is the Greatest! Good news! Glad tidings."

Even in such a dire situation, the Messenger foresaw a positive. He knew that the Qurayzah's decision clearly aligned them with the enemy now and that the believers would eventually be victorious over them. The Messenger sent Zayd and a group from the grossly

outnumbered army to protect the Ansari fortress where their women and children were stationed.

The army of believers also became aware of this development. That night was a long, difficult one for them as their lives hung in the balance and their conviction was truly put to the test.

Realizing that the inside of Madinah was exposed to the enemy, the hypocrites amongst them said to the Messenger, "Our houses now are naked and defenseless. Let us go back."

In reality, they were too cowardly to meet the opposition in battle. They left the army and went to their households in Madinah.

Only the most dedicated of believers were left standing with the Messenger behind the trench. They continued to patrol all day and night, lest the opposition breach the barrier.

There was, however, a narrow stretch of the trench which a Qurayshi horseman and four others were able to jump over. After a verbal exchange to stir up one-on-one combat, the elder Qurayshi charged on his horse. Ali and his horse also galloped forward. The two of them disappeared into a plume of dust. The believers looked on, wondering if their friend had prevailed.

"The Majestic is the Greatest," declared Ali.

He had killed his opponent with a sword blow to the neck, causing the enemy cavalry to retreat. A few other Qurayshi warriors, including Khalid and the son of Abu Jahl, were able to briefly cross the trench and engage in fighting. However, they also had to fall back as they could not sustain the assault. The number of wounded horses and disheartened soldiers in the Qurayshi cavalry was quickly escalating.

A disbeliever, Nuaym, was also present at the Battle of the Trench, although he was not Qurayshi. Impressed by prior interactions with the Messenger and by his truthfulness, the faith entered Nuaym's heart. Nuaym decided to slip into the believers' camp.

He went to the Messenger and found him praying.

The Messenger finished and then asked, "Oh Nuaym, why have you come?"

Nuaym responded, "O Messenger, I am a believer and my people don't know it. I want to help you."

The Messenger observed, "You are just one man. Go back and do anything you can think of that can protect us."

Nuaym asked, "Oh Messenger of The Majestic, do you allow me to say anything?"

The Messenger advised, "To the utmost of your power, set them at odds with each other...war is deceit."¹⁵⁰

In war time, deception is a common military tactic employed by nations around the world. However, it is not the same as treachery, nor is it the same as breaking treaties. Believers are never to break their promises.

Late at night, Nuaym went inside Madinah to his close business contacts in the tribe of Qurayzah and said to them, "You know who I am. You trust me. We have had dealings in the past. Now I am here for your own good. We have a stronger relationship than the Quraysh.

"Realize that this land is your land. This wealth is your wealth. This property is your property. As for the Quraysh, they have nothing to lose if they just leave. You have everything to lose. If they find an opportunity to attack, they will attack. But if they get tired, they are going to turn their backs and leave, and you will be the ones who will suffer.

"So, my advice to you is refuse to fight unless and until they guarantee you hostages from amongst them that will live with you. Take 70 of their noblemen and tell them to be with you as collateral so they do not turn their backs and flee. If they do this, then they will never abandon their own until they have fought the Praiseworthy."

The next morning, Nuaym went to his friend, Abu Sufyan, and divulged, "You know my status amongst my people. You have good relations with me. A news has reached me, and I feel our friendship owes that I tell you because of our past, but please keep it a secret.

"Know that the tribe of Qurayzah have regretted what they are doing and now they are getting double thoughts and they have sent a message to the Praiseworthy saying, 'If we hand over 70 of the

noblemen of the Quraysh to execute, will you forgive us for our lapse in judgment?' If they come to you to ask for your noblemen, beware!"

Abu Sufyan was perplexed but trusted Nuaym. He did not know that Nuaym had switched loyalties. Nuaym went to his own tribe and spun a similar story, signaling that the Quraysh may abandon the siege and the tribe of Qurayzah is going to realign with the Messenger. Nuaym also warned his people that a representative from Qurayzah would come and ask for 70 of their own noblemen – in addition to 70 from the Quraysh – but advised they should ask for collateral first.

Motivated by Nuaym's insinuations, an emissary from the tribe of Qurayzah came to Abu Sufyan and said, "The Quraysh have delayed too long, and they have done nothing but talk. Let us set a date, and you attack from your side, and we will attack from our side, and the other confederates will attack from their side. We will finish up this matter of the Praiseworthy. Before we set the date, we want you to send 70 of your noblemen to us so that we can be assured that you will not depart and leave. So hand over 70 of your noblemen, and let them come back with me."¹⁵¹

Abu Sufyan responded impassively, "Let me think about this."

A similar exchange happened with the other confederate tribe. Division and doubt arose amongst the Quraysh and their confederates, like weeds penetrating deep into the already loose groundwork of the enemy lines. Abu Sufyan did not trust the tribe of Qurayzah anymore. He thought they were going to betray him and refused their demand.

The following day, Nuaym returned to the tribe of Qurayzah and disclosed, "Do you know what Abu Sufyan said as soon as your emissary left? He said, 'I swear by The Majestic, we will not hand them one baby camel much less 70 of our noblemen. Do they expect us to trust them that they will not execute all 70?' "

The chieftain of Qurayzah became upset and wailed, "Woe to me! I knew this would happen. I swear by The Majestic, this man [leader of al-Nadir] brings nothing but bad luck."

Sensing that the situation was quickly unraveling, Abu Sufyan sent the son of Abu Jahl and several senior representatives to the tribe of Qurayzah. The Quraysh demanded that the following morning, all of the confederates and the tribe of Qurayzah would attack the

believers. After all, there had been very little direct fighting thus far and casualties were few on both sides. The Jews of Qurayzah strongly objected that Saturday was their day of Sabbath in which they could not go into battle. They suggested a delay until Sunday, in addition to holding firm to their demand that 70 Qurayshi noblemen be handed over as collateral. The pagan Quraysh were not familiar with the Sabbath and were perplexed as to why the tribe of Qurayzah was stalling.

Returning to Abu Sufyan, the son of Abu Jahl said, "They have betrayed us. They say tomorrow is a day that they do not work and they do not fight."

Abu Sufyan was enraged. He called a Jewish man who was amongst them and asked what the Sabbath was.

Upon receiving an explanation, Abu Sufyan responded, "What is Sabbath except a day between Sunday and Friday? ...This is your treachery. You are trying to make a fool out of me!"

Scared of Abu Sufyan's reaction and motivated by his hatred for the Messenger, the Jewish man went to the chieftain of Qurayzah and pleaded to break the Sabbath so that they could fight their enemy on Saturday.

The chieftain of Qurayzah said, "I swear by The Majestic, even if we are killed, we are not going to break the Sabbath."

Meanwhile, the Messenger said to the believers, "Oh people, don't wish to meet the enemy, but if you are forced to fight them, then be patient and know that Paradise is under the shade of the swords."

The Messenger then supplicated, "Oh Majestic One, The One who has revealed the Book, The One who is quick in retribution, and The One who sends clouds and the wind, destroy the confederates and shake the ground from under them."¹⁵²

As emotions and turbulent loyalties swept the Qurayshi army, an incredible sandstorm struck the battlefield at night. Both sides shivered from the chilling conditions. Visibility was so poor that the people could not even see their hands in front of them. Tents were being blown away by the overpowering, howling winds. The Quraysh and their confederates were torn on what to do next.

On the other side, the Messenger turned to the believers around him and asked, "Who is there who will bring me news of the enemy, and I shall be his friend on the Day of Resurrection?"

They were feeling cold, hungry, and exhausted. The believers waited to see who would stand up for the assignment. No one stood, not even Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman ibn Affan, or Ali, all of whom would have been recognized by the Quraysh. The Messenger asked two more times for a volunteer to cross battle lines and bring back a report from the opposing side.

When there was still no response, the Messenger said, "Oh Hudhayfah, get up and bring us news of the people, but do not alarm them."¹⁵³

Hudhayfah, the keeper of secrets, was shivering and anxious.

The Messenger supplicated, "Oh Majestic One, protect him from in front of him and from behind and from his right and from his left and from on top and from below. Protect him."

Hudhayfah said, "Every fear that I felt, it disappeared from my heart."

Hidden by the darkness of night, Hudhayfah bravely crossed enemy lines and stealthily reached within earshot of Abu Sufyan, surrounded by the confederates. He could have struck Abu Sufyan with an arrow but abstained as not to disobey the Messenger's instructions.

Addressing the confederates, Abu Sufyan said, "I am about to say something. Let everyone amongst you verify that the person next to him is trustworthy."

Right away, Hudhayfah turned to the man sitting on one side, grabbed his hand, and demanded, "Who are you?"

After receiving a surprised response, he then turned to his other side, snatched another man's hand, and repeated, "Who are you?"

Projecting authority, Hudhayfah managed to not disclose his own identity.

Abu Sufyan disclosed, "My people, we are not here in our houses, nor can we remain here forever. Our animals have perished.

Our horses are tired. The tribe of Qurayzah has betrayed us. Now you see this wind and how it is harming us. Neither can we keep a pot on our fires, nor can our fires even remain lit. I think we should all return. Whatever you say, I am leaving."

Abu Sufyan untied his camel and jumped on top, ready to depart back to the City. As Hudhayfah crept back to the believers, he saw 20 angels who had taken the form of men, riding horses with covered faces and turbans.

The angels called out, "Go tell your friend that we have done the job of fighting for him."¹⁵⁴

Hudhayfah returned in the last third of the night and found the Messenger in prayer, as he always was during that hour or anytime something troubled him. Both men covered themselves with a blanket to bear the cold. Hudhayfah gave the Messenger news of the confederate retreat.

Then The Majestic revealed, "O you who have believed, remember the favor of The Majestic upon you when armies came to attack you, and We sent upon them a wind and armies of angels you did not see. And ever is The Majestic, of what you do, seeing."¹⁵⁵

The Messenger said, "I have been made victorious with As-Saba and the people of Ad were destroyed by Ad-Dabur."¹⁵⁶

Whereas the easterly wind of As-Saba is mostly a wind of mercy, the westerly wind of Ad-Dabur is much harsher and known to destroy civilizations. As the Battle of the Trench neared an end, the force of As-Saba caused the Quraysh and its allies to withdraw in humiliation, although it did not inflict casualties.

Once the opposing army retreated the next morning, the Messenger told the believers they could go back home. The Messenger did however recall some of them to guard the trench, in the event that the Quraysh decided to return by surprise. After approximately one month of siege, the Messenger and the believers had defeated the Quraysh and their confederates yet again in the Battle of the Trench. The winds of change were blowing in favor of the believers, witnessing a major turning point in the struggle between the two sides.

28. Justice

After the tiring Battle of the Trench, the Messenger went home to his wife, Umm Salamah. The houses of the Messenger and his wives were simple, one-room structures covered by thatched date-leaf roofs. With sunlight trickling in through the overlapping fronds overhead, infrequent rainstorms would pour through the abundant cracks in the ceiling. While the shaded rooms sighed for reprieve from the intense noonday sun, there was no escaping the desert night cold. The Messenger's house measured just 10 feet in width and 12 feet in length. He had two doors, with one leading to the main place of prayer.¹⁵⁷

Just after putting down his sword, but before he could take off his armor, the Messenger was visited by Angel Gabriel around Noon time. Angel Gabriel was wearing a turban of soft brocade and riding a mule with a silk saddle, glistening in the bright sun.

"Oh Messenger," Angel Gabriel asked, "have you put down your weapon?"

The Messenger replied, "Yes."

Angel Gabriel said, "As for the angels, they have not put it down yet. I have just arrived with a new battalion. Oh Praiseworthy, The Majestic is commanding you to go to the tribe of Qurayzah. I am

heading there right now. I am going to shake the earth underneath them."

The Messenger sent a crier across Madinah ordering that the believers quickly take up arms and arrive outside the land of Qurayzah that very afternoon. Ali arrived first and raised a flag outside of their fortress. The people of Qurayzah uttered insults and curses in regard to the Messenger.

As the Messenger traveled to the fortress, he passed a group of believers and asked, "Has anybody proceeded us?"

They responded, "We have not seen anybody except Dihyah Al-Kalbi riding on a white mule."

"That was Gabriel," the Messenger remarked, "The Majestic has sent him to shake the ground under their feet."

When he descended to Earth, Angel Gabriel would often take the form of a very handsome man in Madinah – Dihyah Al-Kalbi.

Upon the Messenger's arrival at the fortress of Qurayzah, Ali rushed to him and said, "Oh Messenger, why don't you just camp over here?"

The Messenger responded, "Perhaps they are saying things about me that are irritating you."

Ali admitted, "Yes, they are."

The Messenger reassured, "Once they see me, they will not be able to say those things."

After setting up his camp outside of the fortress, the Messenger addressed the people of Qurayzah, who had barricaded themselves in.

He asked, "Oh group of the Jews, didn't The Majestic humiliate you? Hasn't The Majestic's anger come upon you?"

They responded, "You were never one who acted foolishly."

The believers laid siege on the tribe's fortress for a total of twenty-five days.

During this period, the leader of Qurayzah said, "Oh my people, I suggest one of three choices. Number one, we accept this man's faith. I swear by The Majestic, we all know that he is the

Messenger, the one who has been predicted in our books. If we do so, then our lives and our property will be safe.”

The people of Qurayzah did not doubt the authenticity of the Messenger. They were devout Jews, and clear signs and miracles had appeared before their eyes.

Nevertheless, they responded, “We swear by The Majestic, we will never leave our religion.”

The leader of Qurayzah said, “Let us kill our own families and then charge outside with our swords drawn until we are eliminated. If we die, we have left nothing to worry about. If we win, there are plenty of women that we can marry afterward.”

The people of Qurayzah rejected this gruesome option.

The leader of Qurayzah said, “If you refuse the first two, then the only option we have is to surprise attack them. The only day that will be a surprise is the day of the Sabbath.”

They responded, “We will never break the Sabbath. Don’t you know if we do this, The Majestic will send a punishment upon us?”

Enraged and frustrated, the leader of Qurayzah stormed, “I swear by The Majestic, since your mothers have given birth to you, none of us has ever made one decision in our lives.”

The tribe of Qurayzah chose to send an envoy to the Messenger, pleading, “Oh Praiseworthy, give to us what you gave to the tribe of al-Nadir.”

They asked that they be allowed to leave town with their families along with as much as their camels could carry, while relinquishing their lands. The Messenger refused.

The envoy then returned with a request that their lives be spared, and they would give up all of their property and camels. The Messenger declined the offer.

The envoy left and came back to request that an Ansari man, Abu Lubabah – who had previously socialized with the tribe of Qurayzah – enter into the fortress. The Messenger agreed to send him forth. When Abu Lubabah arrived in the fortress, the people of

Qurayzah had a mixed reaction – some of the men were relieved but others amongst the women cried.

They asked him, “What do you think? Should we surrender or not?”

Abu Lubabah advised, “Yes, you should.”

As he spoke, however, he simultaneously motioned with his hand that their throats would be cut. In that moment, Abu Lubabah knew that he had made a treacherous mistake. Feeling guilty, he departed and bypassed the army of the believers. He entered the main place of prayer in Madinah and tied himself to a pillar.

Abu Lubabah said, “I swear by The Majestic that I will remain tied to this pillar until The Majestic accepts my repentance, and I shall never venture to the tribe of Qurayzah for I will never be in an area where I disobey The Majestic and His Messenger.”

Several days later, at the time of the morning prayer, the Messenger woke up. He received a revelation and laughed.

His wife, Umm Salamah, asked, “What has caused you to laugh? May you ever be laughing as long as you live!”

The Messenger responded, “The Majestic has accepted the repentance of Abu Lubabah.”

The Majestic, revealed, “And [there are] others who have acknowledged their sins, they have mixed a deed that was righteous with another that was evil. Perhaps The Majestic will turn unto them in forgiveness. Surely, The Majestic is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”¹⁵⁸

Umm Salamah went to Abu Lubabah and said, “The Majestic has accepted your repentance.”

Although the believers tried to untie him from the pillar, Abu Lubabah refused unless the Messenger did it himself. The Messenger came out and generously did so. He then led the morning prayer.

Back at the fortress, at least one Jewish man of the Qurayzah had vocally refused to betray the Constitution of Madinah. A believer

let him go freely and the Jewish man fled, never to be seen again in town.

"That was a man," the Messenger said, "who The Majestic saved because of his honesty."

Eventually, the entire tribe of Qurayzah decided to surrender to the believers. The memories of past interactions with their fallen Jewish neighbors weighing heavily on them, an Ansari sub-tribe pled with the Messenger to spare the tribe of Qurayzah.

The Messenger responded, "Will you be happy if one of your own decides their fate?"

The group became pleased with the approach.

"I have chosen for you Saad ibn Muadh," the Messenger declared.

The entire city, both Jews and Ansar, breathed a collective sigh of relief at the mention of Saad's name. He was a just, popular, and wise leader from their own people—a brilliant decision by the Messenger as Commander in Chief, and as a mercy to all people.

It had been 25 days since Saad had incurred a deep arrow wound to his hand in the Battle of the Trench. He was still bleeding through his bandages as he rested in the makeshift clinic set up in a tent. His sub-tribe visited him and shared the news that he would serve as the judge for the tribe of Qurayzah. It was painful for him to move. They put Saad ibn Muadh on a mule, enabling him to slowly ride through the byways of Madinah to the Jewish fortress. His sub-tribe pressured him to spare the tribe of Qurayzah. Saad signaled that he knew he was close to death and cared not for the future of his political career in Madinah. If he was not faithful and true to The Majestic now, then when would he be?

When he came within sight of the army of believers, the Messenger said to the Ansari sub-tribe, "Stand up to greet your leader."

The Messenger generally discouraged the believers from making a habit of standing when greeting another person except to welcome a guest, elder, or traveler after a long journey.

The Messenger said to Saad, "Your people have accepted you as a judge."

Saad addressed his sub-tribe, "I call you to make a promise with The Majestic; will you listen and obey me if I give the verdict?"

The Ansari sub-tribe agreed. He then lowered his gaze out of respect and turned to the Messenger.

Saad asked him, "And you as well, oh Messenger?"

The Messenger responded, "Yes, we have agreed."

Given that the faith allowed minority parties the option to follow their own laws, Saad ibn Muadh decided that the treacherous tribe could be tried according to their own legal system. Jewish law specified that those who break a treaty or commit treason should face the penalty of death.

The Old Testament states –

"When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace.

"If they accept and open the gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labor and shall work for you.

"If they refuse to make peace and engage in battle, lay siege to that city.

"And when the Lord, your God, delivers it in your hand, put to the sword all the men in it.

"And as for the women, the children, the livestock, and everything else in the city, you may take it as plunder for yourselves and you may use the plunder the Lord, your God, has given you from your enemies."¹⁵⁹

Without hesitation, Saad ibn Muadh delivered the decision, "My judgment is that their men [of Qurayzah] should be executed and their property distributed and their women and children be taken captive."

The Messenger declared, "I swear by The Majestic, oh Saad, you have decreed upon them the judgement of The Majestic from above the seven heavens."

A small minority of Qurayzah who embraced the faith or who had done exceptional good deeds benefiting the believers were spared. With the exception of one female who had committed murder, all other women and children were left unharmed. However, the majority of men of Qurayzah were tied up, executed, and buried. They were given this treatment because of what they did of treachery and deceit, not because of who they were. Treason is punishable by death in almost every nation state in the world.

The war spoils included thousands of sheep, goats, and camels; 2,000 spears; 1,500 swords and shields; 300 suits of armor, and land. These were distributed fairly according to the laws set forth in the Book. The entire believing army was made up of volunteers, and those who rode horses had higher expenses caring for and feeding their animals. Therefore, each warrior with a horse got three shares of the war spoils compared to one share for the warrior who walked. One-fifth of the booty was given to the Messenger, his relatives, the orphans, poor people, and travelers. A significant quantity of alcoholic beverages was uncovered from the Jewish fortress, and destroyed.

One night, shortly after Saad ibn Muadh delivered the verdict, Angel Gabriel came to the Messenger and said, "O Messenger, who is this dead man? When he arrived, the doors of Heaven opened and the Throne of The Majestic shook."

The Messenger went to check on Saad ibn Muadh but learned that he had just died from his battle wound at the age of 37. The believers carried him to the funeral. Although he had been a formidable man, Saad's body somehow felt light to them.

The Messenger said, "Verily, 70,000 angels have come down. They have never come down to this earth except for now. They are carrying Saad's body with you."

These specific angels also performed the funeral prayer.¹⁶⁰

Before the burial, the Messenger said to the late Saad ibn Muadh, "May The Majestic reward you with goodness, to the leader of the people. You have fulfilled your promise to The Majestic, and The Majestic will fulfill his promise to you."

After the burial, surrounded by his friends at the graveyard in Madinah, the Messenger's expression changed, and he proclaimed thrice, "Glory to The Majestic!"

All the believers repeated after him.

The Messenger then said, "The Majestic is the Greatest!"

His friends asked him what the meaning of this was.

The Messenger responded, "This righteous servant – for whom The Throne of The Majestic shook – he has now been squeezed in the grave and then set free. If anyone were to have been freed from the squeezing of the grave, it would have been Saad ibn Muadh."

Saad was raised up to Paradise.

29. Great Victory

While the Messenger – the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) – was asleep one night, he saw a dream that he was at the Sanctuary. His friends were praying and some of them shaved their heads in the City. In his dream, no adversaries prevented them from performing these rites of the smaller pilgrimage. When he awoke, the Prophet (peace be upon him [PBUH]) was overjoyed and shared what he saw with his close friends. They were all elated. Feeling years of homesickness and nostalgia for the City, the believers yearned to visit the Sanctuary. The Quraysh had blocked them from returning on pilgrimage or from visiting for so long.

The Prophet (PBUH) made it known within the community and to the tribes around Madinah that he intended to visit and pray at the Sanctuary. He extended the invitation to whoever wanted to join him on the pilgrimage. While many neighboring tribes were reluctant to accept, fearing repercussions from the Quraysh, the Prophet (PBUH) was joined by 1,400 believers who wanted to journey with him. He was also accompanied by one of his wives, Umm Salamah.

On the first day of the first sacred month, the Prophet (PBUH) and the group of believers set out with a peaceful intent, wearing no major arms except for swords secured in sheaths, which was a customary traveling item to carry in that time. Both the believers and the pagans recognized that bloodshed during the four sacred months was forbidden. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) rode on his camel and brought along 70 additional camels, which were intended for sacrifice for The Majestic's sake after performing the pilgrimage rites. He had intended to distribute most of the meat to the poor and impoverished in and around the City.

A few miles outside of Madinah, the Prophet (PBUH) and the believers prayed in a sacred valley, and they got dressed into simple white garments. The Prophet (PBUH) dispatched a scout to learn what the Quraysh were doing. Like a white cloud traversing the land, the pilgrims looked incredibly unified and serene. As they continued forward, they remembered and praised The Majestic out loud.

One of the only believers who was traveling and not dressed in the garments of pilgrimage spotted a group of wild zebras. He grabbed his bow and arrows, galloped forward, and managed to successfully hunt one. After asking the Prophet (PBUH) of its permissibility, some of the pilgrims ate of the zebra meat, which was a delicacy for them.¹⁶¹

Back in the City, the Quraysh were quite perturbed to learn about the Prophet's (PBUH) journey to the City. Wanting to deter the believers from visiting the Sanctuary, the Quraysh dispatched two of their military leaders along with a 200-man battalion to thwart the Prophet (PBUH) outside of the City – the city of Makkah, which is located east of the Red Sea. Situated in the middle of a valley between hills of sand, Makkah was a city of great homage to all those in the Arabian Peninsula, following in the practice of Prophet Abraham (PBUH) and his family.

The scout gathered intelligence and reported back to the Prophet (PBUH) that Khalid and an armed Qurayshi force dressed in leopard skins were on their way. With the Qurayshi battalion garbed in the valuable and indicative spotted skins, it was without doubt that the enemy's intent was nothing but war.

"The Quraysh are now in such a state that they can think only of war," Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained. "I am prepared to agree to a truce with them, if they so desire. I ask them only to leave me alone to speak to people. If I am successful and other people follow me, then the choice is theirs to do likewise. If they refuse, they will have preserved their strength. If they are determined to stop me, I swear by The Majestic that I will fight them over this cause of mine until I die, and even then they cannot prevent what The Majestic wills."

The Prophet (PBUH) did not want to battle the Quraysh. He ordered that the pilgrims encamp. The Prophet (PBUH) described the situation to his friends, shared a suggested path forward, and then asked them what they thought.

In response, Abu Bakr thoughtfully advised, "Messenger of The Majestic, you have set out in order to pay a visit to the Sacred House. You have no intention of fighting or killing anyone. Proceed, therefore, toward the Sanctuary. If any people try to prevent us from reaching it, then they are the ones whom we shall fight."

The Prophet (PBUH) was content with this approach and wanted the believers to keep traveling forward. He did ultimately want to maintain peace and avoid armed conflict. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) asked if anyone from amongst the group knew how to navigate through an alternate route as to bypass the Qurayshi soldiers. One of the believers knew an alternate way and navigated the pilgrims through a valley filled with thorns and volcanic rock. Their feet started bleeding, and though their hearts fluttered with excitement at their approach, they winced with each painful step toward Makkah.

The Messenger said, "This valley that we are going through now, for you is like the door was for the tribe of Israel...No one shall pass through this valley except that all of his sins will be forgiven except for the man with the red camel."¹⁶²

The pilgrims regained their motivation and walked through the valley at length. A man in the back of the group had lost his red camel. His fellow travelers urged him to approach the Prophet (PBUH) to determine how he too could be forgiven.

The man with the red camel made clear his intention when he surprisingly responded, "Searching for my camel is more beloved for me than to go to your friend to have my sins forgiven."

As nightfall began, the pilgrims reached the plain of al-Hudaybia, which was very close to Makkah. At that point, the Prophet's (PBUH) she-camel sat down and despite calls to rise, it would not get up!

The pilgrims yelled at the she-camel, "Go! Go! She has become stubborn."

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) defended her honor and said, "She has not become stubborn, and neither is that in her nature. Rather, she is held back for the same reason which held back the elephant."

The Prophet (PBUH) recalled the story of the elephant, in the year that he was born, when the Christian ruler of Yemen rode toward Makkah with an army led by a huge elephant. The army marched in the direction of the Sanctuary, aiming to annihilate it and divert its influx of pilgrims and traders. As the army thundered toward Makkah, the lead elephant suddenly fell to its knees and sat, refusing to walk any further. Witnesses saw the ruler and his army being attacked and destroyed by birds throwing stones at them from the sky. Thus was their stratagem thwarted in a most unanticipated way.

The Prophet (PBUH) instructed the believers – the Muslims – to set up camp. Conditions were very dry and water was quite scarce. The Prophet (PBUH) understood how thirsty everyone was and went to the nearly empty well of al-Hudaybia. Some of the pilgrims descended down with the Prophet's (PBUH) arrows. He asked for a pail with the little water that was left. Sitting next to the well, the Prophet (PBUH) rinsed his mouth with some water, spit it out, and prayed to The Majestic. He requested his friends to pour the water into the well. Shortly thereafter, the well miraculously became so full of water that all 1,400 of the Muslims were able to quench their thirst and purify themselves with it. Even the camels had their fill!

Assessing the situation, the Prophet (PBUH) knew how to proceed although it was not intuitive to the Muslims.

"By Him who holds my soul in His hand," he declared, "I shall respond favorably to any proposal the Quraysh puts to me today which helps establish good relations and guarantees respect to The Majestic's sanctuaries."

Meanwhile, scouts reported to Khalid that the Muslims had taken an alternate route. Early in the morning, the Quraysh dispatched a force of 80 armed men. Amazingly, the Muslims encountered the enemy, overwhelmed them with sheer numbers and defense, and captured all of them without killing or wounding anyone. Showing mercy and a preference for peace, the Prophet (PBUH) decided to forgive and release the Qurayshi warriors.

Realizing that their first approach had failed, the Quraysh dispatched a representative from the tribe of Khuzaah to the Prophet (PBUH). The emissary met Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and shared with him that the Quraysh were adamant about not allowing him to enter Makkah. The Prophet (PBUH) made it clear that he did not want to tangle with the Quraysh and wanted only to worship peacefully at the Sanctuary – known as the Kaba, the earthly House of The Majestic.

The emissary returned to the Quraysh and reported back, "We have come to you after seeing this man and hearing what he says. Would you like to hear what he told us?"

Some arrogantly flicked away the emissary, saying, "We do not wish to hear anything he says."

Nonetheless, others wanted to hear it. The emissary shared what had happened and implored them not to be hasty. He shared that the Prophet (PBUH) did not want conflict and only wished to visit the Kaba.

The Quraysh stubbornly declared, "Even if he does not want to fight, he will never be allowed to enter Makkah against our will. No one shall say that he had the better hand over us."

Then the Quraysh decided to send forth a second envoy. This man originally came from Taif, the city that had treated the Prophet (PBUH) so poorly years ago during the year of sorrow when the Prophet's (PBUH) wife and uncle passed away. The envoy wanted to ensure that the Quraysh would not mistreat him.

He plainly said, "I have noted what sort of abuse you have poured on the heads of those you have sent to Muhammad. You know that to me you are parents and that I am your son. When I heard of your trouble, I gathered those of my people who obeyed my orders and have come to give you support."

The Quraysh acknowledged, "This is certainly true, and we have no doubts about you."

Then the second envoy reached the Prophet (PBUH) and said to him, "Muhammad, I have left your people mobilizing their forces. They are swearing that they will never let you reach the Sacred House until you have overwhelmed them...Have you gathered this mob to smash your own people? It is the Quraysh you are fighting, and the Quraysh have mobilized even their women and children, and are now in a very determined mood, pledging to God that you will never enter their city. My feeling is that you will be in a very difficult situation tomorrow, when this mob lets you down. I certainly recognize no one among them and cannot see that any one of them comes from a respectable background."

During this tirade, the representative reached forward and grabbed the beard of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Abu Bakr spoke up and requested the envoy show more respect while speaking with the Prophet (PBUH).

Observing this, one of the Muslims, who just so happened to be the representative's nephew, tapped the envoy's hand away from the Prophet (PBUH) with the bottom of his sword.

The envoy's nephew warned, "Keep your hand off the Prophet's (PBUH) face before it is chopped off."

The envoy did not take this seriously.

The nephew said, "Confound you – how ill-mannered you are!"

The representative had mischaracterized the intentions of the Prophet (PBUH) and insulted the Muslims. Nevertheless, the Messenger (PBUH) calmly responded, reemphasizing to the envoy that he simply wanted to visit the Kaba, a freedom that all people on the Peninsula were able to enjoy without being blocked.

The representative went back to Makkah and reported, "Oh people of the Quraysh, I have seen Khusru, the Persian Emperor, and Caesar of the Roman Empire, and Negus of Abyssinia, in their respective kingdoms. I swear that I have never seen a king enjoying among his people a similar position to that of Muhammad among his friends. I swear by The Majestic, he did not even spit except that one of his friends caught it before it touched the ground and rubbed it on his face and body. Never did he wash himself except that they were fighting one another to catch those drops of water coming from him. They do not fix their eyes when they look at him. They do not raise their voices when they speak to him. He does not need to give more than a signal to any one of them for that man to do what he is bid.

"I have looked at those people, and I have seen that they do not care what may happen to them...Make up your minds. He has made a proposal to you, and I counsel you to conclude a peace agreement with him and to accept his offer. I am giving you my sincere advice, and I certainly fear that you will not be able to overcome him."^{163,164}

The Quraysh expressed their displeasure to this envoy and adamantly persisted in refusing the Prophet (PBUH) a visit to the Kaba on peaceful terms. The second envoy decided to leave Makkah and went back to Taif.

After thinking over the situation, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) took the initiative to send one of his own emissaries to the Quraysh and supplied him with one of his own camels to ride, which further signaled a peaceful intention. Despite the common understanding of that time that envoys were to receive diplomatic immunity from both parties which were on the brink, an angry Qurayshi mob tried to kill the Muslim representative, hamstringed the camel and wounded it. The envoy was saved by a relenting man in the crowd who had a similar tribal descent! When the Prophet (PBUH) heard of this surprising development, he did not let it deter him from continuing to achieve a peaceful resolution.

When the Quraysh dispatched a third emissary from the largest neighboring tribe, the Prophet (PBUH) spotted him from afar and said to the Muslims, "This is a man who belongs to a religious community. Drive the sacrificial animals toward him so that he may see them."

The third representative was a wise man and saw the hundreds of hungry sacrificial animals in the valley which were brought for the sake of The Majestic and to share with the poor people of Makkah. He turned back without even meeting Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)! The envoy realized that the Prophet (PBUH) and his friends had come to worship at the Kaba. He made it very clear to the Quraysh not to block the Prophet (PBUH), the pilgrims, and the sacrificial animals from entering Makkah. The Quraysh responded with insults to yet another one of their own representatives. The envoy withdrew his entire tribe from the Quraysh, further splintering the opposition.

This time the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) requested Umar — who had exhibited strength and bravery and lived with the Quraysh before embracing the faith — to go into Makkah and speak with its leaders.

"Oh Messenger," Umar responded, "my animosity to the Quraysh is well known, and I think that the Quraysh will not accept me and that they will kill me. I don't have anyone from my tribe to protect me. If you want me to go, I will go, but Uthman ibn Affan has more nobility in their eyes than I do."¹⁶⁵

Uthman ibn Affan, twice son-in-law to the Messenger, was close to the Prophet (PBUH) in lineage and was, in fact, from the same sub-tribe as the leader of the Quraysh, Abu Sufyan. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) agreed to send forth Uthman ibn Affan for discussions with the Quraysh. Uthman ventured toward Makkah on a road until he encountered people on the way who initially rebuffed him from proceeding further. As he started to turn back, his cousin happened to be in the crowd and convinced Uthman to sit honorably on his very own horse for protection to enter into Makkah for negotiations. Uthman ibn Affan made it safely to the Qurayshi leaders and delivered the same consistent message that the Muslims only wanted to pray at the Kaba peacefully. The opposition continued to be stubborn, opposing the Muslim desire. Uthman's conversations with the Quraysh went on for three days in Makkah! During this time, Uthman also visited Muslims in the City who were trapped, oppressed, or persecuted to deliver a message from the Prophet (PBUH) that, "The Majestic is aware of their situation, and The Majestic will make a way out for them soon."¹⁶⁶

In his absence from the camp, a rumor reached the Prophet (PBUH) that Uthman ibn Affan had been killed. Although he could not confirm that this had occurred, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was quite sad. This precipitated the Prophet (PBUH) to call on each of the believers individually, requesting that they pledge to fight the Quraysh to the end without turning back, even though they were hungry, outnumbered, not sufficiently armed, and had not made full preparations for a battle.

A crier was sent out across the Muslim camp to announce, "Gabriel has come down to the Prophet (PBUH), and he is calling you to give the allegiance to him."

As Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stood under a tree at al-Hudaybia, the believers did not hesitate to take the "pleasing oath" to fight without wavering, even if it meant martyrdom. With the exception of one hypocrite, every pilgrim gave the pledge. The Prophet (PBUH) placed his left hand in to his right hand to make the oath on behalf of Uthman ibn Affan. That the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) represented Uthman to take the oath in his absence was a significant honor. During the process of taking close to 1,400 pledges, the hand of The Majestic – the one and only God, Allah – was over the hand of the Prophet (PBUH), and those who gave the pledge to the Prophet (PBUH) were giving it to Allah.¹⁶⁷

The Prophet (PBUH) was content with how the Muslims responded to the call and said, "You are the best people on Earth right now."¹⁶⁸

In a short while, Uthman ibn Affan returned and the Prophet (PBUH) was happy to see him safe. He reported back on his discussions with the Quraysh.

In Makkah, the Quraysh came to learn of the solemn pledge that the Prophet's (PBUH) friends had taken. They trembled and changed their minds that peace was, in fact, preferable to an escalating conflict. After another failed negotiation attempt by an opposition envoy, the Quraysh eventually sent their highest level man yet.

This emissary was named Suhayl, and was a noble Qurayshi leader well known for his eloquence and staunch opposition to the Muslims. Suhayl was troubled deeply by the thorn in his side that both

his dear sons had accepted the faith, even if it meant displeasing their father. His sons were devoutly in the service of Allah and his Messenger (PBUH). One clever and brave son managed to escape his father's snares and reached Madinah. The other son sat patiently in prison for over four years, suffering simply because he had embraced the faith – the faith of Islam.

Suhayl led an official delegation to reach a treaty with the Muslims. Riding toward the Muslim camp, he was conflicted with bitterness at the transformation of his sons and a profound desire to negotiate a treaty with the Messenger (PBUH) in favor of the flailing Quraysh.

When the Qurayshi representatives appeared at a distance, the Prophet (PBUH) said, "Suhayl has come. Allah has made things easy for you now."

The Prophet (PBUH) treated Suhayl and the Qurayshi delegation with honor. Discussions began on the many issues at hand. Suhayl did much more talking than the Prophet (PBUH) did. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) listened and accepted all of the Quraysh's terms. The Quraysh were astonished that the Prophet (PBUH) did not show much resistance nor desire to debate the conditions. Even the Muslims were surprised to see the Prophet's (PBUH) approach of agreeing to the Qurayshi terms of the treaty without even consulting his friends as was his habit on important issues. The Prophet (PBUH) then requested his cousin, Ali, to write the agreed upon treaty so that both sides could sign it.

The Prophet (PBUH) instructed Ali to ink, "In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Beneficent."

Suhayl sharply interjected, "I do not know of this. Write down: 'In your name, Our Lord.'"

The Prophet (PBUH) showed great flexibility, asking Ali to consent on this point.

He asked Ali to carry on with, "These are the terms of the peace agreement negotiated between Muhammad, Allah's Messenger, and Suhayl ibn 'Amr."

Suhayl interrupted again, "Had I accepted that you are Allah's Messenger, I would not have fought you. You have to write down your name and your father's name."¹⁶⁹

The Prophet (PBUH) responded, "I swear, I am the Messenger of Allah even if you deny this."

Nevertheless, he gave in once more, asking Ali to adjust what was being written.

Some of the more significant terms of the treaty of al-Hudaybia as agreed upon by both sides included –

- A ten-year truce where neither side would attack
- Any man who left the Quraysh to be with Muhammad (PBUH) without seeking prior authorization from their guardian was to be returned to the Quraysh
- Any man who was with Muhammad (PBUH) and then left to be with the Quraysh would not be required to come back
- Any tribe that wanted to ally with either Muhammad (PBUH) or ally with the Quraysh was permitted to do so
- Muhammad (PBUH) would not be allowed to enter Makkah that year. After one year, he could enter Makkah with his group unarmed for three days while the Quraysh would leave town during that time.

As the treaty was being inked, a Muslim man unexpectedly appeared, still wearing handcuffs and dragging behind him chains, after having escaped from a dungeon in Makkah.

It was none other than Suhayl's own son. Surprised to see him, Suhayl struck his son and took a hold of him harshly.

Suhayl firmly said, "This is the first person whose case I take up. You must return him to me."

The Prophet (PBUH) responded, "We have not finished drawing up the document yet."

Fuming, Suhayl threatened, "Then I have not agreed to any terms with you whatsoever."

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Gift him to me."

"No," Suhayl retorted, "I am not going to gift him to you."

The Prophet (PBUH) repeated, "Just go ahead and do it."

Suhayl once again rejected the request and flogged his son. He struck him again and again in front of everyone present. Tensions escalated, and both the Muslims and the Quraysh called on Suhayl to take a more gentle approach with his son! The poor son writhed before his father.

In an attempt to break the impasse, a Qurayshi delegate guaranteed the safety of Suhayl's son from then on. Huffing, Suhayl stopped the beating.

With the marks of torture obvious on his body, his son cried out, "My fellow Muslims, am I to be returned to the unbelievers to try to turn me away from my faith?"

The Prophet (PBUH) projected his voice so that all could hear him addressing Suhayl's son, "Be patient and endure your situation for Allah's sake. He will certainly provide for you and those who are suffering with you a way out of your hardship. We have made a peace agreement with those people, giving them a pledge by Allah that we will be faithful to the terms of our agreement. We shall not violate our pledges."

Umar was not pleased with how the situation was unfolding. He walked to Suhayl's son.

Umar motioned with his eyes to his sword, and said, "Be patient, and realize that their blood is not worth anything."¹⁷⁰

Suhayl's son did not take the sword to exact revenge. Eventually, he was dragged back to Makkah, with the Muslims looking on and worried about their fellow brother in Islam.

The treaty was finally agreed upon with witnesses present from both sides. The Muslim witnesses included Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman ibn Affan, and Ali, all of whom were destined to be the future leaders of the rising nation state.

One of the biggest implications of the signed treaty was that the Muslims in Madinah were being acknowledged as an independent, political entity.

Once the Qurayshi delegation had left, Umar asked the Prophet (PBUH), "Are you not the Messenger of Allah?"

The Prophet (PBUH) answered, "Yes."

Umar asked, "Are we not upon the truth and our enemies upon misguidance?"

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) agreed, "Yes."

Umar was puzzled, "Why then should we accept humiliation in matters of our faith?"

The Prophet (PBUH) reassured, "I am Allah's servant and Messenger. I shall not disobey Him, and He will never abandon me."

He was following orders from Allah.

Umar asked, "Have you not told us that we would go to the Kaba...?"

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) responded easily, "Have I told you that you will go there this year?"

Umar and others indicated he did not.

The Prophet (PBUH) comforted them, "You will certainly go and circumscribe the Kaba if Allah wills."

Still unsatisfied, Umar went to Abu Bakr and asked him the same series of questions, which Abu Bakr answered similarly to how the Prophet (PBUH) replied.

Abu Bakr warned Umar, "Oh man, follow him whatever he does. I believe that he is Allah's Messenger, and he will not disobey his Lord. So you hang on to the stirrup of his saddle."

Feeling regret and wanting to atone for his emotional reaction, Umar would later free several slaves as well as pray and fast extra for the sake of Allah.

Umar reflected, "Accuse your own opinion before you accuse the religion."¹⁷¹

The Prophet (PBUH) announced to the Muslims, "Slaughter your animals, shave [your heads], and release yourselves from consecration."

Since they felt that they had not completed the smaller pilgrimage, the believers all stood by and watched on, waiting to see what would happen next. The Prophet (PBUH) echoed his call three times, and there was still no action! In a state of worry, the Prophet (PBUH) went into his tent where his wife, Umm Salamah, waited for him. She asked him what the matter was.

The Prophet (PBUH) turned to his beloved wife and shared his concern with her.

He confided, "The Muslims are ruining themselves. I have given them a command, and they have not obeyed."

"Messenger of Allah," she consoled, "do not blame them. They have been under great pressure because of all the trouble you have taken to achieve this peace settlement and because they now realize that they have to take the long way home without achieving their purpose."

Umm Salamah suggested that he continue to lead by example and go out in public to shave his hair and slaughter his own sacrificial animals. The Prophet (PBUH) was put at ease. Her advice made a lot of sense and the Prophet (PBUH) did exactly that. He left his tent, called for a barber, and had his head shaved.

Before slaughtering his camels, he made sure to say, "Allah is the Greatest!"

The pilgrims observed Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taking action, and in short order, they followed suit, performing both rites. Although the Muslims were not allowed to perform the pilgrimage, the camel meat was sent to the impoverished in Makkah. Once the Muslims had released themselves from consecration, they started their travel back to Madinah. 20 days had elapsed from the start of the standoff with the Quraysh at al-Hudaybia until they departed.

On the journey back, Allah revealed in the Book – the Quran – a chapter entitled "The Conquest."

The Prophet (PBUH) called Umar forward and said, "A chapter from the Quran has been revealed to me tonight, and it is much dearer to me than all that the sun overlooks put together."

With great pleasure, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) recited from the Quran, "Certainly was Allah pleased with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you, under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down tranquility upon them and rewarded them with an imminent victory."^{172,173}

Umar asked, "Is it a conquest, Messenger of Allah?"

The Prophet (PBUH) answered, "Yes indeed. By Him who holds my soul in His hand, it is a grand victory."

Umar responded, "Allah is the Greatest!"

He raced up and down the ranks with his camel to announce the news.

Separately, a man from the group muttered, "This is not a victory. We have been prevented from entering the Sacred Mosque, and our sacrificial animals were not allowed to reach their appointed destination. The Prophet (PBUH) also had to return to the unbelievers some Muslims who have tried to join us."

When the Prophet (PBUH) came to learn of these comments, he responded, "What bad words. It is, indeed, the greatest victory. The unbelievers were willing to use only peaceful means to prevent you from going into their homeland; they were also willing to come to you to negotiate a peace agreement and a pact of mutual security. Your good, overall condition has worried them. Allah has given you the upper hand over them. He has enabled you to go back safely, having earned His reward. All this makes it indeed the greatest victory. Have you forgotten the day of Uhud, when you were running as fast as you could in the mountain, fleeing before them, caring for nothing, and I was calling you to stop and fight for your Hereafter? Have you forgotten the day when they allied their forces against you and tried to organize a pincer assault on you, attacking you from front and behind? Have you forgotten how you were utterly distressed, you could not fix your eyes on anything, your hearts almost reached your throats and all sorts of doubts and suspicions were prominent in your minds?"

The Muslims said, "Allah and His Messenger tell the truth indeed."

Most of them were then content with putting their trust in Allah.

When he had returned to Madinah, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "No one who has given the pleasing oath shall ever enter the fire of Hell."¹⁷⁴

Upon initial glance at the treaty, the two provisions regarding the emigration of people between Makkah and Madinah seemed to favor the Quraysh. However, very shortly after it was signed, a man residing in Makkah – Abu Busayr – came to Madinah to declare his Islam. He was not able to stay as the Prophet (PBUH) wanted to fulfill the pledges made at al-Hudaybia. Abu Busayr was soon escorted back by two of his tribesmen. On the journey to Makkah, Abu Busayr got a hold of a sword and killed one of the escorts while the other ran away in horror. Abu Busayr returned back to Madinah and reported to the Prophet (PBUH) what he had done. However, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) held firm to his position and did not detain him. Abu Busayr understood the signal and fled for safety, settling by coastal land near the Red Sea and not too far away from Makkah. When Suhayl's son heard the news, he escaped his own oppressors and joined Abu Busayr.

It was not long before their coastal group numbered 80 Muslims who were unable to emigrate to Madinah because of the treaty. Having faced so much injustice from the Quraysh, they spared their enemy no expense and raided their caravans. A little over a year after the treaty, Abu Sufyan could not tolerate the heavy losses to the caravans and dispatched a delegation to the Prophet (PBUH), imploring him to accept the 80 coastal Muslims in to Madinah! The Prophet (PBUH) obliged. Thus, the lopsided provisions that the Quraysh had imposed began to backfire and ended up benefiting the Muslims. Suhayl's son and the others entered Madinah in great happiness at having reached their new home.

30. Treasure

North of Madinah, the people of Khaybar had erected several prominent fortresses with strong walls for protection. Its land was lush and fertile with ample underground water reserves to sustain their date palm groves.

Elements from the Jewish tribes of al-Nadir and Qaynuqa settled in Khaybar after being expelled for their treacherous actions against the Muslims. During the Battle of the Trench, the leader of al-Nadir convinced the remaining Jewish tribe of Qurayzah to break their treaty of alliance with the Muslims. For such treason, the men of Qurayzah were executed. Despite this, the leaders of al-Nadir and Qaynuqa continued to show hostility to the Prophet (PBUH) in Khaybar, which did not have an alliance with Madinah.

The Prophet (PBUH) announced that he was marching to Khaybar, mobilizing the people who had traveled to al-Hudaybia.

Although it had been only two weeks since returning from their last journey, the Muslims chanted, "Allah is The Greatest! There is no god except Allah."

The Prophet (PBUH) observed their enthusiasm and advised, "Oh people, be gentle with yourselves. For verily, the One that you

are calling out to is not deaf. He can hear you, and He can see you, and He is nearer to you than your jugular vein."¹⁷⁵

When the Muslims arrived in Khaybar before sunrise, its people were completely surprised. The Jews panicked, rushed back into their fortresses, and yelled to warn everyone of the arrival of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the army.

The Prophet (PBUH) declared, "Allah is the Greatest! Khaybar will be destroyed. Whenever we arrive at the border of a land, then what an evil morning it is for those who have been warned."

The Muslims captured each fortress sequentially. While he was a military genius, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also excelled at developing generations of leaders. He allowed other believers, including Abu Bakr and Umar, to take charge of the army for periods of time.

The Prophet (PBUH) addressed the army, "Tomorrow – at the morning prayer – I will hand the banner to someone who Allah and his Messenger love, and Allah will grant us victory at his hands."

When the moment arrived, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) asked, "Where is Ali?"

His friends informed him that Ali's eyes were bothering him, and he could not open them.

The Prophet (PBUH) responded, "Bring him to me."

Ali appeared and the Prophet (PBUH) rubbed moisture from his own mouth into Ali's eyes, which miraculously healed.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) gave the banner to Ali, and said, "Go forth, and in the Name of Allah, keep on going and do not turn back!"

When Ali had marched for a bit, he realized that there was an important question to ask. As not to disobey the Prophet's (PBUH) order, he did not turn back, but rather shouted out to the Messenger (PBUH) behind him, "What are the conditions that I should be placing upon them?"

The Prophet (PBUH) responded, "Fight them until they testify, 'There is no god except Allah, and Muhammad is his Messenger.' If

they do so, then their lives and their properties are protected from you and me, and their affair is with Allah. For by Allah, if Allah guides through you even one person, then it is better than a whole herd of camels."

The chieftain of one of the Jewish fortresses challenged the Muslims to a one-on-one duel. The first Muslim who stepped up to the challenge was martyred. Although he was leading the contingent, Ali rose to the occasion and defeated the opposing warrior. The people in the fortress came out to battle the Muslims. During the confrontation, a Jewish man managed to knock down Ali's shield. At a disadvantage, Ali went to the heavy door of the fortress, managed to unhinge it, against all odds, and used it as a shield for the remainder of the battle. Afterward, seven of his fellow warriors tried to lift the door which Ali used for protection, but they could not lift it.¹⁷⁶

As the siege continued, the Muslim supplies were running very low. Upon capturing the next fortress, they uncovered a stockpile of food, which they used for the remainder of the mission. As each fortress fell, the Jewish fighters fled to the structures which were still under their control, until finally only one of the largest fortresses remained. After two weeks of waiting, the Jews negotiated a surrender.¹⁷⁷

The Prophet (PBUH) agreed to let them stay in Khaybar on certain conditions. The Jews had to relinquish their stockpile of gold, silver, weapons, and armor. They would also be required to give half of their annual produce to the Muslims. This was a huge fortune and further strengthened the position of the Muslim nation state on the Peninsula. Based on the amount of *land* gained in the Battle of Khaybar, it was the largest conquest during the life of the Prophet (PBUH). While they had felt sustained hunger in Madinah during certain periods before, this victory enabled many of the Muslims to eat to their fill for many years to come.

Given that the Muslims were not numerous enough to supply their own labor, the Jews were to provide all of the labor and maintenance for the agricultural lands. Lastly, the Prophet (PBUH) made it clear that the Muslims could cancel the agreement at their sole discretion and at any time. Some of the tribes neighboring Khaybar were also conquered and received the same deal.

The Muslims who had been at al-Hudaybia received a bigger share of the war spoils, just as Allah promised in the Quran.

A Jewish lady whose husband had been killed during the conflict at Khaybar decided to exact revenge on Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). She prepared a large tray of food and treated the lamb meat with a highly potent poison. When the Prophet (PBUH) and his friends sat to eat it, he put a morsel in his mouth.

The Prophet (PBUH) immediately said, "Everybody stop eating. The shoulder of the lamb has told me that it has been poisoned."

Everyone spat out the food in their mouths with the exception of one man who had already swallowed the poisoned food. He soon fell ill and died. The Prophet (PBUH) called the tribe that had gifted the food to him.

He asked them, "If I ask you anything, will you promise to tell me the truth?"

The Jewish tribe responded, "Yes, we will tell you the truth."

The Prophet (PBUH) asked them to name one of their ancestors, and they answered. He informed them that they were lying and stated the correct name.

The Jewish tribe said, "You have spoken the truth."

"If I ask you a question," Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) asked again, "will you be honest with me?"

They responded, "You already see now if we lie, you can tell. So there is no reason for us to lie. We will be honest with you."

The Prophet (PBUH) asked, "Who is going to the fire of Hell?"

The Jewish tribe said, "We will go for a short period of time, but then God will save us, and you and your people will remain forever."

They knew that they had not been true to the laws of the Torah.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) responded, "Remain humiliated in the fire of Hell. I swear by Allah, we will not remain after you. Now I will ask you a third question. Will you tell me the truth?"

The Jewish tribe said, "We will say the truth."

The Prophet (PBUH) asked, "Did you poison the lamb?"

They said, "Yes, we did."

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) asked, "Why did you do that?"

The Jewish tribe attempted to reason, "If you are a liar in your claim to be a Prophet, we would be free of you and your conquering. If you are a Prophet, then our mischievousness would not have harmed you anyway."

They admitted that a lady from their tribe had poisoned the lamb.

After the perpetrating Jewish woman was summoned, the Prophet (PBUH) asked her, "Why did you do this?"

Since she had lost her husband and uncle in the conflict, the Jewish woman wanted revenge. The Prophet (PBUH) personally forgave her for trying to kill him. However, given that a man had died from the poison, she was justly executed for being guilty of murder.

Jaafar – the cousin of the Prophet (PBUH) – along with a group of Muslims appeared at Khaybar after living in Abyssinia for more than a decade. After having emigrated from Makkah to Abyssinia, fleeing persecution from the Quraysh, Jaafar made his way back to Madinah and then rushed to Khaybar upon learning the Prophet (PBUH) was there. When the Prophet (PBUH) saw Jaafar, he stood up and kissed his cousin on the forehead.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exclaimed, "I don't know which of the two things is making me happier today – the conquest of Khaybar or the return of Jaafar!"

Although the Muslims who had lived in Abyssinia did not arrive in time to serve with the army at Khaybar, they were still given a share of the war spoils. After all of the hardships they had

experienced after leaving home, they were at last tasting a reward in this life.

Safiya was a young, beautiful woman amongst the Jews and daughter of the chief of al-Nadir. Around the time when the Muslims marched on Khaybar, Safiya woke from a surreal dream. She saw, in her sleep, the moon, bright and white like a pearl from heaven, rise from Madinah and fall in her lap. When she shared this dream with her husband, he slapped her face and left a dark bruise on Safiya.

He accused her, in a rage, "You surely wish to be wed to the King of the Arabs!"^{178,179}

Following the siege, Safiya mourned the deaths of her father, brother, and husband. They had been killed in the battle of Khaybar. Her father, especially, had fiercely opposed Islam since the Prophet's (PBUH) emigration to Madinah.

Shortly after Safiya was taken captive by a Muslim man, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) paid her ransom. Extending a hand of compassion, the Prophet (PBUH) invited Safiya to Islam and offered to give her an honored place in his own household. Despite all of the family losses she had suffered, Safiya was touched by the sweetness of the rising faith, bright as the full moon cutting beams of light through her gloomy sorrow. Her heart was soft, and she embraced Islam. The Prophet (PBUH) freed Safiya and proposed marriage to her. It was a new dawn as they were wed. Safiya's dream was realized, for goodness truly fell into her lap when she married the Last Messenger (PBUH).

Sometime later, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) visited Safiya, and found her crying. She shared with her husband that his other wives were teasing her and minimizing her position. She felt hurt, caught amidst a petty catfight among co-wives.

The Prophet (PBUH) cheered up Safiya and advised her not to let his other wives use their ancestry as a means of gaining leverage over her. He perked her up and encouraged her to use her origin to her advantage!

The Messenger (PBUH) beamed at his beloved wife, Safiya, “Why did you not reply to them and say, ‘How can you be superior to me when [Prophet] Aaron is my father [ancestor], and [Prophet] Moses is my uncle, and my husband is Muhammad?’”¹⁸⁰

31. Roman Emperor Heraclius

The treaty of al-Hudaybia brought relative peace between the Quraysh in Makkah and Muslims in Madinah. Muslims and pagans across the Peninsula were able to interact without the fear of imminent bloodshed. In the quest to spread Islam globally, the Prophet (PBUH) selected four friends who were bright, strong in character, and would be able to deliver letters to the powerful neighboring rulers of the time. Each one had a waxed seal which had ‘Allah’ stamped on the top and below was imprinted ‘Muhammad, the Messenger (PBUH).’

Upon being dispatched from Madinah to the Roman Empire, the Muslim envoy arrived in a small town south of Damascus. He gave the Prophet’s (PBUH) letter to that territory’s governor. The Muslim envoy was given some gold, which the Prophet (PBUH) eventually gave away to the poor in charity. The governor then forwarded the letter to Caesar – the Roman Emperor Heraclius – who was in Jerusalem.¹⁸¹

Known as a political leader, warrior, and Christian theologian, Heraclius wanted to learn more about the Prophet’s (PBUH) background. He sent a representative to the nearby Qurayshi caravan which was trading, meandering its way through Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, and Jordan. It happened to be the caravan of Abu Sufyan.

He and his friends were summoned to Heraclius in Jerusalem. Heraclius called them into the court, where he had all of his senior dignitaries present.

He called for his translator who relayed Heraclius' question to them, "Who amongst you is closely related to that man who claims to be a Prophet?"

Abu Sufyan replied, "I am the nearest relative to him."

"Bring him close to me," Heraclius motioned, "and make his companions stand behind him."

Exhibiting exceptional intellect, Heraclius told the translator to tell Abu Sufyan's friends that he wanted to ask some questions regarding the Prophet (PBUH). If Abu Sufyan should speak a lie, the Qurayshi travelers behind him should contradict Abu Sufyan.

Abu Sufyan would later remark, "By Allah! Had I not been afraid of my friends labeling me a liar, I would not have spoken the truth about the Prophet."

Heraclius asked Abu Sufyan, "What is his family status amongst you?"

Abu Sufyan admitted, "He belongs to a noble family amongst us."

Heraclius further asked, "Has anybody amongst you ever claimed the same (to be a Prophet) before him?"

"No," Abu Sufyan replied.

Heraclius inquired, "Was anybody amongst his ancestors a king?"

Abu Sufyan replied, "No."

Heraclius asked, "Do the nobles or the poor follow him?"

"It is the poor who follow him," Abu Sufyan answered.

Heraclius inquired, "Are his believers increasing or decreasing?"

Abu Sufyan replied, "They are increasing."

Heraclius then asked, "Does anybody amongst those who embrace his religion become displeased and renounce the faith afterwards?"

Abu Sufyan said, "No."

"Have you ever accused him," Heraclius inquired, "of telling lies before his claim to be a Prophet?"

Abu Sufyan replied, "No."

Heraclius said, "Does he break his promises?"

"No," said Abu Sufyan.

He could not find anything to say against the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in all honesty except, "We are at truce with him, but we do not know what he will do in it."

Heraclius continued on, "Have you ever had a war with him?"

Abu Sufyan replied, "Yes."

Then Heraclius said, "What was the outcome of the battles?"

Abu Sufyan replied, "Sometimes he was victorious and sometimes we."

Heraclius said, "What does he order you to do?"

Abu Sufyan stated, "He tells us to worship Allah and Allah alone and not to worship anything along with Him, and to renounce all that our ancestors had said. He orders us to pray, to speak the truth, to be chaste and to keep good relations with our relatives."

Heraclius enlightened the Quraysh of what he had gleaned, saying, "I asked you about his family and your reply was that he belonged to a very noble family. In fact all of the Prophets come from noble families amongst their respective peoples."

"I questioned you whether anybody else amongst you claimed such a thing, your reply was in the negative. If the answer had been in the affirmative, I would have thought that this man was following the previous man's statement."

"Then I asked you whether anyone of his ancestors was a king. Your reply was in the negative, and if it had been in the affirmative, I

He and his friends were summoned to Heraclius in Jerusalem. Heraclius called them into the court, where he had all of his senior dignitaries present.

He called for his translator who relayed Heraclius' question to them, "Who amongst you is closely related to that man who claims to be a Prophet?"

Abu Sufyan replied, "I am the nearest relative to him."

"Bring him close to me," Heraclius motioned, "and make his companions stand behind him."

Exhibiting exceptional intellect, Heraclius told the translator to tell Abu Sufyan's friends that he wanted to ask some questions regarding the Prophet (PBUH). If Abu Sufyan should speak a lie, the Qurayshi travelers behind him should contradict Abu Sufyan.

Abu Sufyan would later remark, "By Allah! Had I not been afraid of my friends labeling me a liar, I would not have spoken the truth about the Prophet."

Heraclius asked Abu Sufyan, "What is his family status amongst you?"

Abu Sufyan admitted, "He belongs to a noble family amongst us."

Heraclius further asked, "Has anybody amongst you ever claimed the same (to be a Prophet) before him?"

"No," Abu Sufyan replied.

Heraclius inquired, "Was anybody amongst his ancestors a king?"

Abu Sufyan replied, "No."

Heraclius asked, "Do the nobles or the poor follow him?"

"It is the poor who follow him," Abu Sufyan answered.

Heraclius inquired, "Are his believers increasing or decreasing?"

Abu Sufyan replied, "They are increasing."

Heraclius then asked, "Does anybody amongst those who embrace his religion become displeased and renounce the faith afterwards?"

Abu Sufyan said, "No."

"Have you ever accused him," Heraclius inquired, "of telling lies before his claim to be a Prophet?"

Abu Sufyan replied, "No."

Heraclius said, "Does he break his promises?"

"No," said Abu Sufyan.

He could not find anything to say against the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in all honesty except, "We are at truce with him, but we do not know what he will do in it."

Heraclius continued on, "Have you ever had a war with him?"

Abu Sufyan replied, "Yes."

Then Heraclius said, "What was the outcome of the battles?"

Abu Sufyan replied, "Sometimes he was victorious and sometimes we."

Heraclius said, "What does he order you to do?"

Abu Sufyan stated, "He tells us to worship Allah and Allah alone and not to worship anything along with Him, and to renounce all that our ancestors had said. He orders us to pray, to speak the truth, to be chaste and to keep good relations with our relatives."

Heraclius enlightened the Quraysh of what he had gleaned, saying, "I asked you about his family and your reply was that he belonged to a very noble family. In fact all of the Prophets come from noble families amongst their respective peoples."

"I questioned you whether anybody else amongst you claimed such a thing, your reply was in the negative. If the answer had been in the affirmative, I would have thought that this man was following the previous man's statement."

"Then I asked you whether anyone of his ancestors was a king. Your reply was in the negative, and if it had been in the affirmative, I

would have thought that this man wanted to take back his ancestral kingdom.

“I further asked whether he was ever accused of telling lies before he said what he said, and your reply was in the negative. So I wondered how a person who does not tell a lie about others could ever tell a lie about God.

“I then asked you whether the rich people followed him or the poor. You replied that it was the poor who followed him. And in fact all the Prophets have been followed by this very class of people.

“Then I asked you whether his believers were increasing or decreasing. You replied that they were increasing, and in fact this is the way of true faith, until it is complete in all respects.

“I further asked you whether there was anybody, who, after embracing his faith, became displeased and discarded his faith. Your reply was in the negative, and in fact this is true faith, when its delight enters the hearts and mixes with them completely.

“I asked you whether he had ever betrayed. You replied in the negative and likewise the Prophets never betray.

“Then I asked you what he ordered you to do. You replied that he ordered you to worship Allah and Allah alone and not to worship anything along with Him and forbade you to worship idols and ordered you to pray, to speak the truth and to be chaste. If what you have said is true, he will very soon occupy this place underneath my feet, and I knew it from the scriptures that he was going to appear, but I did not know that he would be from you, and if I could reach him definitely, I would go immediately to meet him, and if I were with him, I would certainly wash his feet.”¹⁸²

When Heraclius had finished his speech, there was a noticeable uproar in the Royal Court. He then called for Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) letter and read it:

‘In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Beneficent,
‘From Muhammad (PBUH), the Messenger of Allah
‘To Heraclius, the Emperor of Rome

‘Peace be upon him, who follows the right path. Furthermore I invite you to Islam, and if you become a believer you will be safe, and Allah will double your reward, and if you reject this invitation toward the faith, you will be committing a sin by misguiding your people.

‘And I recite to you from Allah's Book, “O people of the scripture! Come to a word common to you and us that we worship none but Allah and that we associate nothing in worship with Him, and that none of us shall take others as lords beside Allah. Then, if they turn away, say: Bear witness that we are believers.”

Abu Sufyan left the commotion that was unfolding in the Royal Court. After what he had just experienced, it dawned upon him that it was simply a matter of time before Islam would eventually prevail. Abu Sufyan returned to his caravan.

Heraclius was a foreteller and an astrologer. Once while Heraclius was visiting Jerusalem, he got up in the morning in a sad mood. Some of his priests asked him what the matter was.

He replied, “At night when I looked at the stars, I saw that the leader of those who practice circumcision had appeared and become the conqueror. Who are they who practice circumcision?”

“Except for the Jews,” the people replied, “nobody practices circumcision. So you should not be afraid of the Jews. Just issue orders to kill every Jew present in the country!”

While they were discussing this, a courier arrived to convey the news of the Prophet (PBUH). Having heard the news, Heraclius ordered the people to go and see whether the courier was circumcised. They followed him and told Heraclius that he was circumcised.

Heraclius then asked the courier about the Arabs.

The courier replied, “Arabs also practice circumcision.”

Heraclius remarked that sovereignty of the Arabs had appeared. He then wrote a letter to his friend in Rome who was as

knowledgeable as himself. Heraclius then left for Homs, Syria and stayed there until he received a reply of his letter from his friend; the two agreed about the emergence of the Prophet (PBUH) and the fact that he was indeed a Messenger of God.

Upon this confirmation, Heraclius invited all the heads of the Roman Empire to assemble in his palace at Homs. When they assembled, he ordered that all the doors of his palace be closed.

Heraclius emerged and announced, "O Romans! If success is your desire and if you seek right guidance and want your empire to remain then give a pledge of allegiance to the Prophet of Allah."

On hearing this, the people ran toward the gates of the palace but found the doors closed. Heraclius realized their aversion toward the faith of the Prophet (PBUH). When he lost the hope of their embracing the message, he ordered that they should be brought back in audience.

When they returned, Heraclius said, "What I said was just to test the strength of your conviction, and I have seen it."

The people prostrated before him and became pleased with him.

32. Invitations to Powerful Rulers

Aside from the Roman Empire, the other superpower of the time was Persia. At the height of the Persian Empire, it was ruled by Khusru II, who claimed to be a god. Khusru was known as a cruel, lustful emperor and infamous for keeping 3,000 concubines.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) sent one of his envoys to a governor loyal to the Persian emperor. The Prophet's (PBUH) letter was delivered, and it was read to Khusru –

'In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Beneficent.

'From Muhammad (PBUH), Allah's Messenger,

'To Khusru, the emperor of Persia.

'Peace be to him who follows right guidance, believes in Allah and His Messenger, and declares that there is no deity but Allah, the only God who has no partners, and that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger. I wish to convey to you Allah's call, for I am Allah's Messenger to all mankind,

sent with the task of warning all those who are alive that doom will befall the unbelievers. If you submit to Allah, you will be safe. If you refuse, you shall bear the responsibility for the Magians.'

Once the Prophet's (PBUH) letter was read, Khusru arrogantly tore it up into bits.

He said, "How dare he write this sort of letter to me when he is my slave?"

Khusru sent a letter to the governor of Yemen, which was under Persian control, ordering that the Prophet (PBUH) be arrested and be brought to Persia. When the governor of Yemen received the Emperor's letter, he sent two of his officers to find out the real story regarding the Prophet (PBUH). The two Yemeni men traveled until they reached Taif, one of the cities that continued to reject the Prophet (PBUH). They learned that the Prophet (PBUH) was now in Madinah. The people of Taif and Makkah were both happy that the Persian Emperor was now going after Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Yemeni officers journeyed to Madinah and met the Prophet (PBUH).

They said to him, "Khusru, the king of kings, has written to the king of Yemen, commanding him to send us to take you to him. If you comply, the king of Yemen will write to the king of kings interceding on your behalf. This will spare you a great deal of trouble. If you reject his order, you know how powerful he is. He is sure to destroy you and your people as well as your country."

The Prophet (PBUH) observed these two men with their immense moustaches, sprawling across their faces like caterpillars. The sides of their faces and chins were otherwise clean shaven.

He asked them, by the way, who told them to shave their beards off?

The Yemeni officers replied, "Our lord," referring to the Persian Emperor Khusru.

The Prophet (PBUH) responded, "But my Lord has commanded me to wear a beard and to trim my mustache."

He asked them to meet him again the next day. In the meantime, Angel Gabriel told the Prophet (PBUH) that Allah had brought about the Persian Emperor's death at the hands of Khusru's own son. Angel Gabriel even gave the Prophet (PBUH) the time and day that the murder happened.

The two Yemeni officers came back the following day, and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Go back to your lord and tell him that my Lord has killed his lord and that his son has taken over."¹⁸³

Shocked, they mustered up a response, "Do you realize what you are saying? Your arrest has been ordered for something much more trivial than this. Do you still wish us to write this down and inform the king of Yemen of what you have just said?"

The Prophet (PBUH) said, "Yes. Tell him also on my behalf that my religion and my kingdom will replace that of Khusru and will sweep all before it. Tell him also that if he accepts Islam, I will give him what he has now under his authority and will make him a ruler in the area he now governs."

The Prophet (PBUH) gave one of the officers a bag of gold and silver, which had come to the Prophet (PBUH) from another king. The two men left and went back to Yemen.

When they returned, the officers told the governor what the Prophet (PBUH) had said.

The governor responded, "This is not the sort of thing a king would say. To my mind, the man is a prophet, as he claims. If he is, what he has just told you will come to pass. If it is true that Khusru has been killed, the man is a Prophet and a Messenger. If not, we will make up our mind about what to do with him."

At around that time, the governor received a message from the son of Khusru indicating that he had killed his father on the grounds that Khusru was becoming a despot. The son of Khusru asked the Yemeni governor and the people for their allegiance. Furthermore, he requested that no additional action be taken against the Prophet (PBUH) until further notice.

The Prophet (PBUH) had miraculously been correct about the murder of Khusru! How could a man so far away from Persia have

known right away that the Persian Emperor was killed and moreover who the perpetrator was?

Upon receiving news from Khusru's son, the Yemeni governor recognized at once that Muhammad (PBUH) was in fact a Prophet of Allah.

One of the officers who had traveled all the way to Madinah was called in. He described that the Prophet (PBUH) did not keep any guards for protection.

The officer further said, "I have never spoken to a man who has inspired me with awe as much as he does."

The governor proclaimed to his inner circle that he wanted to become Muslim, and his advisors followed suit. Many of the people of Yemen, which included Christians, also accepted Islam.

The governor sent a message to the Prophet (PBUH) that he had submitted to the religion. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) sent a group of his friends to Yemen as teachers and role models for the new Muslims there.¹⁸⁴

The Prophet (PBUH) then sent a separate letter to the ruler of Damascus, inviting him to Islam. The ruler became enraged, tossing the letter on the floor and rejecting the message. In retaliation, the ruler was ready to march with his army against the Prophet (PBUH). Since Damascus was under Roman control, Emperor Heraclius learned of this development and ordered the ruler of Damascus to desist and instead report to him in Jerusalem.

The Prophet (PBUH) sent another letter to Negus in Abyssinia, where some of the Muslims had taken refuge many years before.

The envoy delivered the letter to Negus, who read it as,

'In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Beneficent.

'From Muhammad (PBUH), Allah's Messenger,

'To Negus, the king of Abyssinia.

'Peace be with you. I praise Allah, the only God, the King, the Praised One, the Peace, the One who controls everything. I bear witness that Jesus, son of Mary, was God's spirit and His word given to Mary, the virgin, the chaste. She thus conceived Jesus, whom Allah created...as He created Adam...I call on you to believe in Allah alone, and to associate no other deity with Him, and to continue to obey Him, and to follow me and to believe in what has been revealed to me. I am Allah's Messenger, and I call on you and on your subjects and soldiers to believe in Allah, the Almighty. I have thus conveyed my message and given good counsel. It is better for you to accept my good counsel. Peace be to those who follow right guidance.'

The Prophet's (PBUH) letters were brief and tailored to each ruler's unique situation.

The Muslim envoy then gave Negus some sincere input, "You are kind to us...If you do not submit to its word, then your attitude toward this Prophet (PBUH) is akin to the attitude of the Jews to Jesus, son of Mary..."

Negus stated, "I swear by Allah, he is the Prophet (PBUH) awaited by the people of past revelations. Moses has given news of the impending appearance of the Prophet who rides a donkey in the same way as Jesus has given news of the impending arrival of a Prophet (PBUH) who rides a camel."

Negus dispatched his son along with 60 delegates and many gifts to Madinah. He wanted them to declare his Islam to the Prophet (PBUH) and also signal that Negus was willing to come to Madinah. While at sea, however, their two boats sunk and all the men died tragically.

Nonetheless, Negus accepted Islam and wrote back to the Prophet (PBUH),

'In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Beneficent.

'To Muhammad (PBUH), Allah's Messenger,

'From Negus.

'Peace from Allah be to you, Prophet (PBUH), along with Allah's mercy and blessings. I have received your letter, Messenger of Allah, and noted what you have said about Jesus. By the Lord of the Heavens and the Earth, Jesus, son of Mary, is nothing more than what you have stated. I know the truth of what you have said to me...I bear witness that you are Allah's Messenger who tells the truth. I pledge my allegiance to you...and have become a Muslim. I submit myself to Allah, the Lord of all the Universe.'¹⁸⁵

So it came to pass that Islam had spread further in the continent of Africa.

When Negus passed away, the Prophet (PBUH) learned about the news first from Angel Gabriel. The same morning, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) informed the Muslims in Madinah, and they performed the funeral prayer because they understood that nobody in Abyssinia would do so. Two weeks later, a traveler shared the news of Negus' death, confirming the miracle of what the Prophet (PBUH) had already shared with the people.

The Prophet (PBUH) also sent separate letters to the respective leaders of Egypt and Bahrain, inviting them to the faith. The Egyptian ruler did not embrace Islam while the ruler of Bahrain accepted with open arms. The message of Islam took wings and flew globally, capturing hearts. The emerging nation state had also elevated itself to be worthy of diplomatic dialogue with other influential kingdoms and regions of the time.

33. Flashback

One day when the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his friends were returning to Madinah, he diverted from the road into the back country. Without asking where he was going or what he was doing, all of his friends silently followed their leader. The Last Messenger (PBUH) found a grave yonder, sat down, and cried like they had never seen him cry before until his beard was wet with tears. This was the first and only time that many of his friends would see him cry in public. Instead of questioning the Prophet (PBUH), his friends felt his sorrow so much so that they started crying with him.¹⁸⁶

As he wept, he remembered the past when his mother, Amina, was still alive...

Amina and Abdullah were both children of tribal chieftains. Less than a week after marrying Amina, dashing, handsome Abdullah traveled with a trade caravan to Syria. On the way back from the journey, Abdullah fell seriously ill and as not to slow down the caravan, he stopped in the city of Madinah to rest and recover with relatives who lived there. When the caravan returned, Amina was so

excited because she could finally share the news with her husband that she was pregnant with their first child! To her surprise, Abdullah was not with the group. The caravan told her that he was sick and would be coming back soon. Sometime after this, however, news came to the City that Abdullah had died from his illness.¹⁸⁷

Despite this tragedy, Amina experienced a relatively smooth pregnancy. On a Monday during the Year of the Elephant, as she felt the final pangs of labor in Makkah, Amina saw a light emanate from herself all the way to the Christian palaces of Syria. When the sun was at its zenith, her baby boy arrived and saw his first rays of light in this world.

The boy's grandfather, 'Abd al-Muttalib, came and was elated to see his grandson. For a time, his joy overcame the sorrow he felt from the recent death of his dear son, Abdullah. The grandfather took the baby to the Kaba and prayed for him there. 'Abd al-Muttalib named his grandson 'Muhammad,' (PBUH) which means "the one who is praised," or "the Praiseworthy." The Quraysh questioned him about the uncommon name.

He responded, "I want him to be praised by the people of the Earth as I want him to be praised by the people of the heavens."

Upon hearing about the baby's arrival, his Uncle, Abu Lahab was so pleased that he freed the slave girl who had come to deliver the news to him.

'Abd al-Muttalib held a feast to recognize the birth of Muhammad (PBUH).

As was the custom amongst the noble class then, Amina gave her son to be raised in the healthier environment of the desert, away from the congested, metropolitan City of Makkah. The tougher life out there built stamina and discipline in the youth, making later life upon returning home much easier. The other advantage to being raised in the desert was that the language was much more preserved and proper compared to the slang of Makkah.

During a time of drought, a woman named Halima was from such a rural desert tribe and came into the City in search for a baby to

raise on behalf of a noble family. Halima and her family were suffering a lot from poverty. Although she was a wet nurse, Halima was not able to produce milk at that time, despite having young children of her own. They needed money to sustain themselves. Vying to be the caretaker of a wealthy family's child in Makkah was one way that they could supplement their livelihood.

Various caretakers attempted to secure children to take back to the desert. Most did not even visit the house of Amina, and the few that did were not drawn to the level of poverty they observed. Even Halima visited the "orphan child," as he was being referred to, but she left to consider other potentials in the City. As she searched for a baby or toddler whom she could care for, Halima realized that most of the children had already been taken by women from other rural tribes. When she had still not secured a child and felt embarrassed, Halima reconsidered Muhammad (PBUH).

Despite the fact that Amina did not have sufficient money to give her due to the hard times, Halima agreed to take on the child.

Reflecting on this, Halima's husband said, "It is a good idea. He may bring us some blessings."¹⁸⁸

Halima began to suckle Muhammad (PBUH) and her breasts miraculously filled up with milk despite the drought. Before her very eyes, Amina's son and Halima's own child were both able to satisfy their hunger!

Halima had entered Makkah riding on a worn out, slow donkey. When returning home with Muhammad (PBUH), Halima's donkey somehow outpaced all the other donkeys who were being ridden by others.

The other women of the tribe asked her where the donkey came from.

Halima turned to her astonished friends and told them that it was the same one she came with!

Even more awe inspiring was that a cloud shadowed the path of Halima and her family during the journey while the rest of the tribe crossed the desert in the hot sun.

Back at home, Halima would send her sheep out to graze on the harsh terrain, and they would somehow come back full while the sheep of others in the tribe would return hungry. Indeed, very special things were taking place with the entry of Muhammad (PBUH) into Halima's life.

After the two year foster care period had concluded, Halima was reluctant to relinquish Muhammad (PBUH) to his mother given how many blessings and miracles she had witnessed with the boy in her household. Halima insisted in front of Amina that she let her keep Muhammad (PBUH) for a while longer. Amina was touched by Halima's sincere, genuine concern for her son and decided to oblige.

When Muhammad (PBUH) reached the age of four, something extraordinary occurred. Angel Gabriel came to Muhammad (PBUH) when he was playing with the other children. Afraid, his friends ran away upon the Angel's appearance. In the middle of the desert, Amina's son bravely stood where he was, looking at Angel Gabriel. As he resisted, Angel Gabriel overpowered Muhammad (PBUH), forcing him to the ground. The Angel opened the boy's chest, temporarily removed his heart, extracted a black portion from the heart and discarded it.

Angel Gabriel said, "This is Satan's portion that he had in you!"

The Angel washed and cleaned Muhammad's (PBUH) heart in a golden cup with purified, iced water from the well of Zam Zam. He then placed back the boy's heart into his chest and sealed it. Amina's son had been purified spiritually through a physical, open-heart surgery.

The children ran to Halima and screamed, "Our brother has died! A man has killed him!"

Halima was in a total state of shock and ran to Muhammad (PBUH). He was sitting, looking pale. He was quiet, not crying or screaming like the other children were.

Halima believed the story of what had occurred, and she felt that it was time to take Muhammad (PBUH) back to his mother. She journeyed back to Makkah with him and retold the story to Amina.

"Do not fear Satan for this boy," Amina reassured, "for he is protected against him. This boy of mine will have a renowned future. I tell you that my pregnancy was the easiest ever experienced by any woman... Leave him with me and go back to your people."¹⁸⁹

When Muhammad (PBUH) was six years old, Amina took him to Madinah to visit relatives and to see his father's grave. After a month away from Makkah, they headed back home. On the return trip, Amina fell sick while traveling, just like her husband before her. She, too, passed away, leaving the child without parents at such a tender age. The people of the village buried her right there. Muhammad (PBUH) waited near the grave of his mother for a new guardian to take his hand and bring him back to Makkah. 'Abd al-Muttalib rescued the boy by placing him in his care.

Back in Makkah, during the late afternoons, 'Abd al-Muttalib would sit in the shade on a raised platform connected to the Kaba, discussing matters of concern with the tribe. This was essentially the chieftain's throne where nobody else dared to sit. One time, Muhammad (PBUH) jumped up and sat by his grandfather on the platform. Alarmed at the break with custom, his uncles tried to pull him down.

Stopping them, the grandfather said, "Leave him! This is my child, and he can remain on this platform."

Muhammad (PBUH) was the only grandson who enjoyed this privilege. 'Abd al-Muttalib loved his grandson so much that there came a time when he did not let him out of his sight out of concern for his well-being.

On his death bed, his grandfather ordered that Muhammad (PBUH) be placed in the care of his son, Abu Talib. 'Abd al-Muttalib died when the boy was eight years old. It was Abu Talib who remained at Muhammad's (PBUH) side when everyone else seemed to be gone.^{190,191}

...Decades later when he visited a grave just outside of Madinah with his friends, the tearful Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "I used to forbid you from visiting graves, but I asked Allah for permission to visit my mother's grave, and He allowed me to visit her grave. So now I am allowing you."

34. Homecoming

As part of the treaty of al-Hudaybia, the Muslims were permitted to enter Makkah a year after signing the agreement. Once this length of time had passed, the Prophet (PBUH) and 2,000 of the growing Muslim community prepared themselves for the smaller pilgrimage. The group included believing men, women, and children as well as 60 camels which would be sacrificed after the rites were performed. Hedging against any possible Qurayshi attempt to violate the treaty with violence, the Prophet (PBUH) took 100 horses and precautionary arms. Dressed all in white and proclaiming their submission to Allah, the Muslims set out from Madinah toward Makkah.

The two men responsible for the horses and weapons traveled ahead of the Prophet (PBUH) for added protection. At about a day's travel outside of Makkah, they crossed paths with a group from the Quraysh. The Quraysh were not expecting them to show up with such arms and posed some questions.

The two Muslim men responded, "Allah's Messenger (PBUH) will encamp here tomorrow, God willing."

News of this development came swiftly to the Qurayshi chieftains, who worried, "We have certainly honored our promises. Why should Muhammad and his companions come to invade us?"

A representative from their tribe was sent to the Prophet (PBUH) to ask, "Muhammad, we have never known you to break a promise ever since you were a young child. Do you wish to enter your home town with all your arms when you have promised that you will come only with the armament of a peaceful traveler...?"

The Prophet (PBUH) responded, "I am not going to carry the arms into Makkah."

Relieved, the Qurayshi representative said, "This is more like what we have known of your faithfulness."

And yet many who opposed Muhammad (PBUH) still could not bring themselves to submit to the faith of Islam.

Before the Muslims made the final leg of the journey, some number of the Quraysh went to the mountaintops to see the Prophet (PBUH) do the small pilgrimage from afar. Most in Makkah knew that the Prophet (PBUH) had been away from the City for seven years. Moreover, there was a rumor spreading that an illness had gripped Madinah and many of the Muslims, including Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), were in poor health, so much so that it was difficult for them to walk.

The Prophet (PBUH) entered Makkah on his she-camel and was guarded by several of the Muslims. They performed the small pilgrimage in batches, and a group stayed behind with the precautionary weapons outside of Makkah should the Quraysh decide to attack and break the treaty.

Before entering the area surrounding the Kaba, Allah's House on Earth, the Muslims repeated out loud and in unison, "There is no god except Allah alone. He has fulfilled His promise, given victory to His servant, and dignity to His soldiers, and He has alone defeated the confederates."

Given that the Prophet (PBUH) was aware of the false rumor that had spread about the Muslims' physical condition, he said to them, "May Allah have mercy on everyone who shows them that he is strong."

The Prophet (PBUH) and his friends came upon the Kaba and first briskly walked around it for three laps in unison. They then walked around it several more rounds, each time completing a 360 degree counter-clockwise circle, representing that all aspects of a Muslim's life revolve around Allah and the faith of Islam.

The Quraysh were in complete dismay at seeing how vigorously the Muslims were performing this first rite, saying, "Are you sure that these people have been weakened by fever? They are jumping and running like deer."

Then the Prophet (PBUH) rode his she-camel up and down the two historic mounts of Safa and Marwah near the Kaba, totaling seven circuits or 1.3 miles. He was emulating actions of Hagar who ran between the mounts a long time ago, in search of water for her young son, Prophet Ishmael (PBUH).

He then stopped and said, "This is the place to slaughter your sacrificial animals, and all Makkah is such a place."

The Prophet (PBUH) and his friends from al-Hudaybia slaughtered 60 camels in the name of Allah. Afterward, the Prophet (PBUH) and the men shaved their heads to conclude the pilgrimage rituals.

When the time for the midday prayer arrived, the Prophet (PBUH) asked Bilal to go to the top of the Kaba and give the call to prayer.

Bilal called out confidently and clearly, his beautiful voice ringing through the City of Makkah –

"Allah is the Greatest. Allah is the Greatest.

I bear witness that there is no god except Allah.

I bear witness that Muhammad is Allah's Messenger.

Rush to prayer!

Rush to success!

The prayer has begun. The prayer has begun.
Allah is the Greatest. Allah is the Greatest.
There is no god except Allah.”

The Qurayshi hard-liners were incredibly upset to witness Bilal, a former slave, climb the Kaba which contained the tribe's idols and statues. They viewed this as an affront to their ways and social order.

Several of the polytheistic Quraysh said, “I thank god that my father died before he could see this day, with the son of Bilal's mother barking on top of the Kaba.”

The Prophet (PBUH) and the Muslims remained in Makkah for a short time. They walked around the City and spoke to many of the nonbelievers. The inhabitants were pleasantly surprised to see how unified the Muslims were despite the fact that prior to their acceptance of Islam, many of them were members of warring clans. It was clear to many of the people of Makkah how deeply committed the Muslims were to the cause of Allah and the Prophet (PBUH).

Allah did not restrict how many wives Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) could marry, as an exception to the rule that all other Muslim men are permitted to marry between one and no more than four wives at any given time. Islam allows a Muslim woman to be married to one Muslim man at any given time.¹⁹²

Al-'Abbas suggested to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to marry his Muslim sister-in-law, Maymunah, who was of noble descent and widowed. The Prophet (PBUH) took responsibility for many women in need after the death of his beloved wife, Khadija. As the leader of the rising nation state and role model to all of humanity, the Prophet (PBUH) extended marriage proposals out of mercy to widows, for political reasons to unite other tribes, and above all else, for the sake of Allah. The Prophet (PBUH) agreed to wed Maymunah, which would be his last marriage.¹⁹³

Since the Muslims had been in Makkah for three days, the Qurayshi leaders feared what type of influence the Prophet (PBUH) may have on their people and sent two men to him to say, “Your time is up and you have to leave.”

The Prophet (PBUH) suggested, “What is the matter if I stayed a bit longer? I just got married. Let me enjoy being a groom amongst you, and tomorrow we can have a big feast. Come and enjoy the food.”

He showed such magnanimity, even though these Qurayshi men were the same ones who had unsuccessfully tried to eliminate the Prophet (PBUH) and the Muslims at the Battles of Badr, Uhud, and the Trench.

“You are required to leave,” the Quraysh retorted. “We appeal to you by God, and by the covenant which exists between you and us, to leave our land immediately. Your three days are up.”

One of the Muslims replied back, “Liar! This is not your land, nor was it your father's. He will not depart from here unless he wishes to do so of his own free will.”

The Prophet (PBUH) defused the situation and instructed his friend, “Do not be so severe to those people.”¹⁹⁴

The Muslims departed peacefully and encamped several miles outside of Makkah.

As the Muslims were getting ready to head back to Madinah, a young girl ran to them saying, “Oh my uncle! Oh my uncle! Take me. Don't leave me in Makkah.”

She was none other than the orphan daughter of the late Humza, who had been martyred at the Battle of Uhud. She wanted to be with the Muslims.

Ali declared, “She will be our orphan to take care of.”

Zayd said, “The Prophet (PBUH) made me brothers with Humza. So this is my niece. My family should take care of her.”

Also competing for the honor, Jaafer said, “I have the same rank as Ali. She is my cousin. My wife is her maternal aunt.”

Before Islam was crystallized, a number of baby girls in Arabia were buried alive and orphans were mistreated. The faith completely revolutionized attitudes and elevated the status of women and orphans in particular. The reward from Allah for taking care of an innocent orphan girl is immense and beyond comprehension!

Since these three well respected men could not agree on who would adopt the daughter of Humza, the Prophet (PBUH) had to settle the matter. He first praised each one of them.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) turned to Ali, "You are from me, and I am from you."

He then reassured Zayd, "You are our brother and our protector."

The Prophet (PBUH) finally said to Jaafer, "You resemble me the most physically and in manners. Jaafer, she is yours because the maternal aunt will take the status of the mother."¹⁹⁵

The tide had turned. Nearly 20 years had passed and the diminished, weakened Quraysh still clung to their stone and wooden idols, rejecting the message that shone clearly upon the world.

Psychologically impacted by the successful, small pilgrimage of the Muslims, three notable men from Makkah decided to accept Islam. The first was Amr, the shrewd politician, who unsuccessfully tried to lobby Negus to send the Muslims back to Makkah when they had just emigrated to Abyssinia, many years ago. In fact, Amr gave his pledge of Islam to Negus when he visited Abyssinia after the Muslims performed the small pilgrimage. Secondly, Khalid – the military general of the Quraysh who led the cavalry against the Muslims at Uhud – also went to Madinah and became Muslim when it was clear to him that Islam would be triumphant. The Prophet (PBUH) was overjoyed and nicknamed him the "Sword of Allah." Thirdly, the highly respected keeper of the keys to the Kaba, Uthman ibn Talhah, also accepted the faith. These three conversions symbolized yet

another political, military, and spiritual shift to the rising nation state and away from the Quraysh.

35. Face-Off with The Romans

When the Prophet (PBUH) sent an envoy with a letter addressed to Emperor Heraclius, the representative crossed paths with a ruler of a Christian Arab tribe – called Ghassan – in Syria, which enjoyed the favor of the Roman Empire. The diplomatic custom around the world is that ambassadors are to be respected and are not to be harmed. Nonetheless, the ruler in Syria mocked the Muslim envoy. The ambassador was tied up, tortured, and murdered at the hands of the brutal ruler. This act was the epitome of arrogance and insult.

Upon learning of the atrocity, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) wanted justice to be delivered. The signal had to be sent that an ambassador of the rising nation state could not be killed and ignored. He called upon the Muslims to join the army and march north to Ghassan. 3,000 soldiers joined the force. This was the only time when the Messenger (PBUH) named three commanders who would succeed one another in battle, should any of them fall in succession. The Prophet (PBUH) had to attend to pressing matters in Madinah and

could not join the army for this mission. Thus, he appointed Zayd as first in command, followed by his cousin Jaafar, and then a third commander, Ibn Rawahah. The group became known as the Army of Leaders.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) forbade the army to break their promises and prohibited them from killing children, women, the elderly, or monks worshiping in seclusion. Furthermore, soldiers were to refrain from chopping down trees or leveling buildings. On a Friday, the Prophet (PBUH) accompanied the army until they reached the “hill of farewell” just outside of Madinah. He gave them a white flag to carry and advised them to be firm in battle. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) then returned home.

Ibn Rawahah was crying, and he was asked what the matter was.

He said, “I am not crying because of a love for this world, nor am I crying because I have an inclination for it, but I am crying thinking of the verse in the Quran, ‘There is not one of you but will pass over it [Hell]; this is with your Lord; a Decree which must be accomplished.’”^{196,197}

Passing the hill of farewell caused Ibn Rawahah to remember that all people past and present will pass over a bridge above the Hellfire on the Day of Judgment.

A Muslim that could not join the army said to the soldiers, “May Allah accompany you and allow you to return safely and soundly.”

Ibn Rawahah was a poetic man and extemporaneously said, “As for me, I ask for Allah’s forgiveness and a [sword] blow that is mighty and that causes the blood to gush out so that when people pass by my grave, they shall say, ‘Allah guided him to be a warrior and how rightly guided he was.’”

Although the Muslim soldiers tried to march swiftly to preserve the element of surprise, news traveled fast. The tribe of Ghassan raised a very large army of allies and were soon joined by a contingent of Roman soldiers. The opposition forces outnumbered the Muslim warriors by approximately a factor of three to one. The areas surrounding the Arabian Peninsula were acutely aware of the Prophet

(PBUH) and the Muslims' military victories against all odds in prior years. Thus, the Arab Christians and Romans were determined to overwhelm the Muslims with their greater numbers.

When the Muslims reached Jordan, they learned about the size of the opposition forces. They were also not expecting the tribe of Ghassan to come with Roman soldiers, who had superior weaponry, were well trained, and possessed strong horses. These new developments caused the brave men to contemplate the situation over two nights. They deliberated on whether to send a letter to the Prophet (PBUH), requesting advice and further direction.

Zayd asked Ibn Rawahah what should be done.

Ibn Rawahah spoke to the army, "Oh my people, the cause of your hesitation now is the very prize which you have set out to achieve: namely, martyrdom. We have never fought any enemy on the basis of our numerical strength, or our better equipment, or our superior number of horses. We fight them only with this religion with which God has blessed us. Let us march on. I attended the Battle of Badr when we had only two horses. At the Battle of Uhud, there was only one horseman in our ranks. March on, brothers. We stand to win one of two great prizes: either we will achieve victory – and this is what God and His Messenger have promised us, and it is a promise which never fails – or we will achieve martyrdom, in which case we join our brethren who went before us into Heaven."¹⁹⁸

The Muslim army was once again reenergized and ready to continue marching. The veterans amongst them – who had consistently tasted improbable victories – knew that for what they lacked in numbers, they would more than make up with spiritual vigor. As they passed by a small village in Jordan, the locals sent a group to launch arrows at the Muslim soldiers, causing a number of them to be wounded. Only one Muslim warrior died after an arrow struck his heart. Several soldiers asked Zayd if they could go back and confront the aggressors, but he did not want to distract the army from the primary mission of meeting the tribe of Ghassan and the Romans on the battlefield.

After their long journey from Madinah for over one month, they finally reached the village of Mutah. They positioned the army close to a river for easy access to water.

When the Romans arrived on the scene, Abu Hurayrah's eyes became wide with astonishment.

One of his fellow soldiers asked, "What is the matter with you, Abu Hurayrah? Are you amazed and shocked how large the army is?"

Abu Hurayrah responded, "Yes."

The soldier remarked, "But you were not with us at Badr. Let me tell you; we did not win because of the size of our army."

Shortly thereafter, Zayd gave the command to charge. The Romans and the Muslims collided. The Muslims focused their attack at the center of the battle line while ensuring that their outer right and left flanks were not surrounded by the Romans.

Since Zayd was holding the flag as the commander, the Romans launched an assault targeting him. Zayd fought back with all his might but the enemy surrounded him, and he was martyred.

Jaafer quickly stepped in as commander. The Romans targeted him as he held the flag firmly with his right hand. Jaafer was a tremendous warrior, and he fought back bravely and with phenomenal vigor. The enemy cut the legs off from the horse which Jaafer was on, causing him to dismount. Despite being hit several times, Jaafer continued to battle the Romans until one of them cut off his right hand. Before the Muslim flag could fall, Jaafer grabbed the flag with his left hand but it too was severed by the enemy. The Muslim flag fell to the ground. Although he was in great pain as blood gushed out, Jaafer held the flag up with what was left of his arms until a Roman soldier cleaved Jaafer's upper body right off from his lower body. Jaafer's body was later found to have ninety wounds, cuts, and stabs on his body – fifty in the front and forty in the back.

With two Muslim leaders martyred at Mutah, Ibn Rawahah took over command of the Muslims. He grabbed the flag. Before he could make his next move, Ibn Rawahah hesitated briefly.

He said to himself, "I swear, oh my soul, you shall proceed, or I will force you to proceed! The people have gathered, the clamor has

risen, but what is the matter with you? You don't want Paradise? Surely what you have desired has alluded you for too long. What are you, Ibn Rawahah, except for a drop of despised fluid in a bag?"

He went into battle and died gallantly as a martyr.

Evening arrived and with their three appointed commanders gone, Ibn Arqam grabbed the flag, and said, "Oh Muslims, come to me!"

He regrouped with his fellow warriors and asked, "You now have to elect your own commander."

The soldiers responded, "We choose you."

Ibn Arqam immediately backed away, "I do not accept."

The army selected Khalid as their new commander. He had just embraced Islam months before. Khalid was well known far and wide as a military genius.

At night fall, the two armies separated to rest at a safe distance outside of the range of archers. The Muslims buried the martyrs, including the three fallen commanders.

Khalid was quite aware of the Muslim army's relative disparity in numbers. He decided to lead the army to engage the Romans while minimizing Muslim casualties. When Khalid reassembled the army, he had the right flank and left flank swap positions. He also instructed the front forces and rear forces to also switch. Lastly, a group of soldiers was to raise the desert dust and make a lot of noise, making the enemy perceive their numbers to be large.

At sunrise, the opposing sides reentered the battle. Khalid instructed the archers to launch volleys of arrows at the enemy to halt their advance. The Romans were also caught off guard to see new faces on the frontlines, assuming that the Muslims had received reinforcements. As the enemy hesitated and fear set in, the Muslims seized the momentum and inflicted acute casualties on the Romans.

The battle was so intense that Khalid said, "On the day of Mutah, nine swords broke in my hand until I finally had left one Yemeni shield."¹⁹⁹

Despite the Muslim army only incurring a less than 1% casualty rate, Khalid strategically and slowly drew back the army. The Romans felt that they were being led deeper into the desert, which could have proven to be a disaster for them. Thus, they resisted, and the Muslim army started the march back home, unchallenged. Khalid and the Muslims had witnessed the tactics of the Romans, which would be valuable for future expeditions.

Theophanes – who was a Roman historian, aristocrat, and monk – chronicled the Battle of Mutah.

Theophanes stated, "In that village was stationed Vicarius Theodorus [the brother of Emperor Heraclius]...He gathered...this information and ascertained the day and the time when they were about to attack, and therefore he himself attacked them at a village called Mothous [Mutah]. And he killed three emirs...one emir called Khalid, whom they call 'God's sword,' escaped."²⁰⁰

On the way back, while passing by the village in Jordan, the Muslim army avenged the death of their comrade who had been mortally wounded in the heart.

Back in Madinah, as the Battle of Mutah was unfolding, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told the Muslims in real time what was transpiring hundreds of miles away. This was before the advent of modern technology, such as phone, internet, television, radio, and the like.

He described, "Zayd took the banner until he was killed. It was then taken over by Jaafer until he was killed. Then Ibn Rawahah carried the flag until he was killed."

Tears streamed down the Prophet's (PBUH) face as he continued, "It was taken over by a man who is one of Allah's swords, and he fought until Allah granted them success."

In grief and in emotional pain, the Prophet (PBUH) had to sit down to absorb the loss of his adopted son Zayd, his dear cousin Jaafer, and sincere friend Ibn Rawahah.

Although from a military standpoint the Battle of Mutah was not a victory, from a long-term perspective it was the beginning of a

risen, but what is the matter with you? You don't want Paradise? Surely what you have desired has alluded you for too long. What are you, Ibn Rawahah, except for a drop of despised fluid in a bag?"

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Although from a military standpoint the Battle of Mutah was not a victory, from a long-term perspective it was the beginning of a

series of epic battles between the rising nation state and the Roman Empire. A large portion of this superpower's land would soon be successfully conquered by the Muslims. In a relatively short time, the spread of Islam expanded globally.

As the warriors returned to Madinah, the Prophet (PBUH) rejoiced to see the vast majority of the army alive.

However, the people mocked and rebuked the soldiers, "You deserters. You desert a battle being fought for Allah's cause?"

When the Prophet (PBUH) learned what was being said, he responded at the mosque, "These are no deserters. They will live to fight another day."

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) instructed that food be made and delivered to the family of Jaafer as they mourned the death of their loved one.

After three days had passed, the Prophet (PBUH) briefly visited them and said, "Do not cry for my brother's death any more. Let me see his children."

Jaafer's three sons came, and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) arranged for a barber to trim their hair.

The Prophet (PBUH) comforted them, "Muhammad [son of Jaafer] resembles our uncle, Abu Talib. Abdullah [another son of Jaafer] has a likeness to me in shape and manners."

He wanted to make the orphans feel special.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) took Abdullah's hand, raised it up, and prayed thrice, "Oh Allah, allow Jaafer's progeny to flourish. Oh Allah, bless Abdullah in all of his transactions."

As the new man of the house, Jaafer's son – Abdullah – would go on to be an incredibly generous man.

The Prophet (PBUH) told them, "I saw Jaafer in Paradise. Allah had given him two wings instead of his two hands, and he is flying around anywhere that he wants."

Jaafer's widow was concerned for the future of her children who were now orphans.

The Prophet (PBUH) responded, "Do you fear that they will live in poverty when I am their patron in this world and in the world to come?"²⁰¹

For the family of the fallen who fought for the cause of Allah, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) took very good care of them and taught the believers to do the same. After all, he too was an orphan and showed incredible mercy to children who had also lost one or both parents.

One day when the Prophet (PBUH) entered the mosque, he saw his friends grouped together and some were crying.

He asked, "Why are you crying?"

"Why should we not cry, oh Messenger of Allah," they responded, "when the best of us and the most noble of us have left?"

The Prophet (PBUH) consoled, "But do not cry. For the example of my community is like a garden whose owner has cut the leaves and the branches and prepared its houses so that each year, it gives a better crop than the last year. The Messiah – Jesus – will meet this community, and there will be a group that he meets that are like you or even better than you, and Allah will not humiliate a community. I am the first of them, and the Messiah is the last of them."²⁰²

36. Treaty Broken

The peace treaty that the Prophet (PBUH) and Quraysh signed at al-Hudaybia now seemed to greatly favor the Muslims. As a result, the Prophet (PBUH) and the believers were able to spread Islam without fearing repercussions from the Quraysh.

Furthermore, the peace agreement specified that tribes on the Peninsula were permitted to make alliances with either the Muslims or the Quraysh and in doing so, the allies would also be required to abide by the terms of the treaty.

A tribe called Bacr had decided to ally with the Quraysh while the tribe of Khuzaah allied with the Muslims. Despite being aware of the peace treaty in effect, a leader from Bacr held hostility toward Khuzaah and wanted to launch an attack. The tribe of Bacr sought support from the leaders of Quraysh, who not only agreed but also supplied the guerilla force with weapons. Fighters of Bacr launched

the unexpected night raid against Khuzaah at a water spring near Makkah. Armed men from the clan of Bacr killed more than twenty people of Khuzaah – including women and children.

One of the men of Khuzaah fled to the sacred area of the Kaba, seeking sanctuary.

Speaking to their leader, the Bacr clan said, “We have entered the consecrated area. Do not incur the displeasure of your god.”

Blinded by emotion, the leader of Bacr hotly exclaimed, “Today, I have no god. Children of Bacr, take your revenge. I know that you steal in the consecrated area. Would you not take your revenge there?”

Bloodshed in the Sanctuary had been prohibited for centuries, and this restriction was recognized by everyone on the Peninsula. Nevertheless, the leader of the Bacr killed the man from Khuzaah in the vicinity of the Kaba! The Quraysh and its ally had clearly broken the treaty of al-Hudaybia, just two years after it had been signed.

The chieftain of Khuzaah and 40 men traveled to Madinah, intending to convey the news to the Prophet (PBUH). When the representative arrived at the mosque in Madinah, he found the Prophet (PBUH) sitting with his friends. The chieftain reminded Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that they had a common ancestor. He then invoked an old, eternal treaty that Khuzaah had made with the Prophet's (PBUH) grandfather, in addition to the treaty of al-Hudaybia. The chieftain shared the details of the massacre, including mention of his tribesmen who were killed even while praying to Allah.

The Prophet (PBUH) affirmed to the representative, “You shall be helped. May Allah never help me if I do not help the tribe of Khuzaah.”

The Quraysh were not willing to pay the blood money – 2,000 camels – for the murdered victims, nor were they willing to cut off ties with the tribe of Bacr. When the consequences of what they had perpetrated sunk in, the Quraysh agreed to send their leader, Abu Sufyan, to Madinah with the goal of negotiating or extending the duration of the treaty. How they expected him to get it done was

anyone's guess. Abu Sufyan traveled from Makkah to Madinah and decided to first approach Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) at the mosque.

"Muhammad," he said to the Prophet (PBUH), "I have come to ask you to confirm our peace agreement and to validate it for a longer period."

The Prophet (PBUH) asked, "Is this what you have come here for? Have you perpetrated any trouble?"

Abu Sufyan said, "We are abiding by our peace agreement of al-Hudaybia. We strictly observe its terms."

The Prophet (PBUH) was silent in some part after hearing Abu Sufyan's lies. He did not respond further to Abu Sufyan's attempts to converse.

Dejected, Abu Sufyan left to seek out Abu Bakr. When he had found him, Abu Sufyan tried again to see how the treaty could be extended.

Abu Bakr declared, "I cannot help you at all."

Abu Sufyan's stratagem was spoiled again.

After leaving Abu Bakr, Abu Sufyan found Umar. Just a few years ago, Abu Sufyan and Umar had traded fierce words after a bloody battle at Mount Uhud. He, nonetheless, asked that Umar try to convince the Prophet (PBUH) on his behalf.

Turning to Abu Sufyan, Umar made it very clear, "You want me to be your advocate? If I could find nothing to fight you with except dust, I would certainly fight you!"

Abu Sufyan then went to Ali, who was his relative and much younger than him, pleading, "You are the closest person in this whole city to me, and I need your help. So can you please go to Muhammad and intercede on my behalf? Do not let me go back embarrassed and humiliated to my people!"

Ali responded, "Woe to you, Abu Sufyan! I swear by Allah, when the Prophet (PBUH) has decided a matter, we are not going to persuade him otherwise."

Ali's wife, Fatimah, and his son, Hasan, were present during this conversation.

Abu Sufyan then turned to Fatimah in desperation and pleaded, "Oh daughter of Muhammad, can you ask this little boy [Hasan] of yours to go and seek protection on our behalf? If he does so, he shall be respected until the Day of Judgement."

After Fatimah declined his request, Abu Sufyan turned to Ali to make one more plea.

Abu Sufyan begged, "Oh father of Hasan, you see my situation. You see how desperate I am. Give me advice. What should I do?"

Ali counseled, "I don't know anything that will help you now...so why don't you go to the mosque and announce in front of all of the people you are seeking protection."²⁰³

Abu Sufyan went to the mosque and publically announced that he was looking for somebody who could extend him protection, but nobody answered his call. He was after all the face of the opposition at the Battle of Uhud and the Battle of the Trench!

Trying one last time, Abu Sufyan approached his own daughter, Ramlah. Some time ago the Prophet (PBUH) had sent a marriage proposal to her from Madinah when she was living as a widow in Abyssinia. Negus, the King of Abyssinia, himself facilitated and financed the wedding between the Prophet (PBUH) and Ramlah. Out of happiness, he also gave her generous gifts and arranged for a feast. Ramlah then traveled to be with the Prophet (PBUH).

When Abu Sufyan went into Ramlah's room in Madinah for the first time, he leaned down to sit on the Prophet's (PBUH) mattress. Straightaway, she pulled it away from Abu Sufyan and folded it.

Taken aback, Abu Sufyan said to his daughter, "I am not quite sure, child, whether you think that I am above sitting on your mattress or that it is too good for me."

Ramlah responded, "It is the mattress of Allah's Messenger (PBUH) and since you are an idolater, you are impure. Hence, I do not like you to sit on the mattress of Allah's Messenger (PBUH)."

Still surprised, Abu Sufyan was direct, "I am certain some harm has befallen you since you left me, daughter."

Once Abu Sufyan had left town, the Prophet (PBUH) asked one of his wives, Aishah, to prepare his battle gear. As she prepared food for her husband's journey, her father, Abu Bakr, came and inquired why she was making such preparations. Aishah did not reply to any of Abu Bakr's questions. The Prophet (PBUH) did not want to tip off the Quraysh or its allies as to what type of action the Muslims may take.

With a desire to keep the element of surprise intact, the Prophet (PBUH) told the vast majority of the Muslim army to be prepared to set out for a very large expedition. He did not initially specify the destination but made it clear that men who were able to go should respond to the call. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) gave the warriors a week or so to prepare themselves and take care of personal matters. The day before their departure from Madinah, he informed them that they were headed for Makkah.

The Prophet (PBUH) prayed that the safeguards they employed would be successful in not tipping off the Quraysh before their arrival, "My Lord, let the Quraysh receive no news of us until we take them by surprise in their own land."

A Muslim veteran from Badr, Hatib, was concerned that because of his immigrant status, his relatives in Makkah may not be safe if a confrontation were to break out. He took a risk and sent a letter to the Quraysh.

Hatib wrote, "The Prophet (PBUH) is heading toward you with an army like the night, and he is rushing toward you like a river. I swear by Allah, even if he were to come to you alone, Allah would help him over you because Allah will fulfill his promise."

Hatib located a lady who was traveling to Makkah and paid her to secretly deliver the letter.

He said to her, "Your job is to smuggle this letter to the Quraysh, and make sure nobody knows of this letter."

She folded the letter and then concealed it in the braids of her hair.

Allah has infinite knowledge, and He is The All-Seeing and The All-Hearing. Thus, Allah sent Angel Gabriel to the Prophet

(PBUH) to share the details of how Hatib planned to have his letter delivered. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) instructed Ali and a friend to go to a specific place just outside of Madinah where they would find a caravan and retrieve the letter from the woman. They went out and found her precisely as Angel Gabriel had described to the Prophet (PBUH). Ali and his friend demanded she relinquish the letter. She denied that she had it. They searched through her things but could not find the letter.

"I swear by Allah," Ali said, "neither has the Prophet (PBUH) been lied to nor have we been lied to. You will either give us the letter, or we will strip you down and search you."

When she realized how serious they were, the woman asked them to turn around. Since she had hid the letter in her braids, she removed her head scarf, untied her braids, and got the letter. After covering her hair, the woman gave it to Ali and his friend. They then went back with the woman to the Prophet (PBUH) and handed him the letter. She told them what Hatib had asked her to do.

Although the Prophet (PBUH) had received divine confirmation of what Hatib had perpetrated, he still gave Hatib a chance to explain himself. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) called him, and Hatib admitted that he had written the letter.

Umar said, "Oh Messenger, allow me to chop off the head of this hypocrite. He has become a disbeliever in Allah and his Messenger."

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) asked, "Oh Hatib, why would you do something like this?"

"Oh Messenger of Allah," Hatib responded, "why would I want to leave faith in Allah and His Messenger? I did not do what I did leaving my faith nor did I prefer disbelief over Islam. I have not changed who I am or what I was. I did not want to betray nor did I want to be a hypocrite. I knew that Allah would fulfill his promise and execute his command, but rather I wanted to establish a favor with the Quraysh so that my family and property would be protected. All of your other friends have family that would protect their other relatives, and I have no family in Makkah to protect my relatives."

Although Hatib had clearly used flawed logic and committed a grave mistake, the Prophet (PBUH) understood that on the scale of deeds, Hatib had done far more good than bad in his life. Thus, the Prophet (PBUH) judged him mercifully.

He said, "Hatib has spoken the truth. Nobody should say anything about Hatib anymore except good."

Umar suggested, "Oh Messenger, he has betrayed Allah and His Messenger. So allow me to kill him."

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) responded, "Did he not witness Badr? And how do you know, oh Umar, perhaps Allah has looked upon all the people who were at Badr and said, 'Do as you please, for I have forgiven all of you.'"²⁰⁴

Umar's anger dissipated, and he started weeping.

He said, "Allah and His Messenger know best."

37. Remarkable Coup

On the tenth day of Ramadan, the month of fasting, the Prophet (PBUH) set out toward Makkah with 10,000 Muslim soldiers, a titanic army for that time and place! The growth of the Muslim community through conversions was enabled by the peace treaty of al-Hudaybia, which proved to be a far more impactful victory than even most military expeditions. Once the Muslims left Madinah, they were permitted to break their fast because they were traveling. As they marched forward, they found the Prophet's (PBUH) Uncle, Al-'Abbas, and his family emigrating from Makkah, headed in the opposite direction toward Madinah. Al-'Abbas and his family had finally come to declare their Islam. The Prophet (PBUH) was thrilled to see them. He asked Al-'Abbas to take care of his family and then join the army for their mission.

Only when the Muslim army had reached just outside of Makkah did the Quraysh begin to receive news that a large group had assembled outside of the City. The Prophet (PBUH) and the soldiers

set up camp in the evening after nine days of traveling. Two of his cousins learned of his arrival, left Makkah to meet the Prophet (PBUH), and finally declared their Islam after years of opposing the message.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) ordered each individual to light a fire, which amounted to 10,000 small fires. As the people of Makkah observed from afar, the valley looked ablaze, as though engulfed by one immense bonfire orders of magnitude larger than the actual size of the ones lit by the Muslim army. The Quraysh were aghast.

As a new convert to Islam, Al-'Abbas was somewhat concerned that the Quraysh would be no match for the Muslims if there were to be a conflict. He asked the Prophet (PBUH) if he could negotiate on behalf of the Muslims. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) agreed and gave Al-'Abbas his mule to ride late at night.

As Al-'Abbas set out, he reflected, "Oh what an evil morning it is for the Quraysh if the Prophet (PBUH) enters Makkah by force and attacks Makkah before they come to him and submit. It shall be the destruction of the Quraysh for all eternity."²⁰⁵

It just so happened that at the same time when Al-'Abbas ventured out, Abu Sufyan and his two friends were close by trying to gather intelligence.

Abu Sufyan said, "I have never seen such fire and such a great army."

"This must be the tribe of Khuzaah," his friend remarked, "with the fire of war urging them from within!"

"The Khuzaah are far too small to be able to raise such an army and to have such fires," Abu Sufyan disagreed.

Al-'Abbas heard Abu Sufyan talking to his friend and called out to him. Abu Sufyan recognized the familiar voice and responded back.

Al-'Abbas said, "Matters are grave indeed, Abu Sufyan. This is Allah's Messenger with his people. The Quraysh are doomed indeed."

Abu Sufyan asked, "What can we do, my dear friend?"

Al-'Abbas offered, "I am sure that if he were to take you captive, he would have you beheaded. Mount behind me on this mule, and I will take you to Allah's Messenger and ensure your safety."

While Abu Sufyan agreed and went along, his two friends from Makkah returned to the City.

Abu Sufyan entered into the Muslim encampment, led by Al-'Abbas. Recognizing that the rider was on the Prophet's (PBUH) mule, the soldiers let him pass.

Umar, one of the closest friends of the Prophet (PBUH), noticed the scene and said, "Who is it? ... Abu Sufyan, Allah's enemy! Praise be to Allah, who has brought you here with no treaty or promise to save you."

Al-'Abbas said, "Oh Umar, he is under my protection."

Umar and Al-'Abbas requested to enter the Prophet's (PBUH) tent, and they were admitted.

Umar exclaimed, "Messenger of Allah, this is Abu Sufyan, Allah's enemy. Allah has handed him to us with no treaty or agreement to spare him. Allow me to chop his head off."

Al-'Abbas was quick to say, "Messenger of Allah, I have extended protection to him."

Although the friends of the Prophet (PBUH) respected Al-'Abbas immensely, Umar and Al-'Abbas continued to argue in an animated fashion. Umar felt strongly that Abu Sufyan should be executed. The Prophet (PBUH) listened and was silent.

As a new Muslim, Al-'Abbas exclaimed, "Stop it, oh Umar! I swear by Allah, if he were from your tribe, you would never want to kill him."

Umar responded, "Careful, oh Al-'Abbas. I swear by Allah, the day that you accepted Islam was more beloved to me than that of my own father accepting Islam, had he been alive..."

The Prophet (PBUH) sensed tensions escalating and instructed his uncle to have Abu Sufyan spend the night in the tent of Al-'Abbas until dawn. Abu Sufyan and Al-'Abbas were awake most of the night, discussing the situation.

Early the next morning, Abu Sufyan woke up and saw the soldiers washing with water to get ready for the early morning prayer. Turning to Al-'Abbas, Abu Sufyan inquired what they were doing? Al-'Abbas explained the role of cleanliness and purification in the faith.

The Prophet (PBUH) purified himself with water too. The Muslims around him tried to catch the water drops falling off the Messenger to rub on their own faces.

Abu Sufyan said, "I have never seen any king or emperor being treated like this."

The soldiers assembled in straight lines, shoulder to shoulder.

The Prophet (PBUH) called out, "Allah is the Greatest!"

The prayer had begun. Folding his arms in front of him, the Prophet (PBUH) eloquently recited passages from the Quran from memory.

He began each prayer with a recitation of the first chapter of the Quran –

"In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

"All praise and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.

"The Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

"The Only Owner of the Day of Recompense

"You we worship, and you we ask for help.

"Guide us to the Straight Way

"The Way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not of those who earned Your Anger, nor of those who went astray."²⁰⁶

As the Prophet (PBUH) led the prayer, the soldiers listened, standing still, in peace. They all bowed and prostrated in unison, facing in the direction of the Kaba, the house of Allah.

Observing this sight, Abu Sufyan asked, "Al-'Abbas, they are always doing his bidding?"

Al-'Abbas acknowledged, "Yes, indeed. Were he to bid them to stop eating and drinking, they would obey him."

Al-'Abbas then brought Abu Sufyan for another meeting with the Prophet (PBUH).

The Prophet (PBUH) asked, "Abu Sufyan, is it not time for you to realize that there is no deity other than Allah?"

Abu Sufyan responded, "May my mother and father be given in ransom for you. How gentle are you, how merciful are you, and how fulfilling are you to the ties of kinship! By God, had there been any deity alongside Allah, he would have been of some use to me by now."

The Prophet (PBUH) followed with, "Woe to you. Is it not time for you to testify that I am Allah's Messenger?"

Abu Sufyan said, "May my mother and father be given in ransom for you. How merciful you are, how kind you are, and how generous you are! On this point, I still have some doubts."

Al-'Abbas urged the Qurayshi leader, "Come on...Declare your acceptance of Islam and make it clear that you believe that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad is Allah's Messenger..."²⁰⁷

Abu Sufyan thought about it and eventually declared his Islam, becoming Muslim.

Al-'Abbas urged the Prophet (PBUH) to grant Abu Sufyan some honor before the Muslims entered Makkah.

The Prophet (PBUH) agreed and declared, "He who enters Abu Sufyan's home is safe."

Abu Sufyan was not really in a position to negotiate but asked, "How many people can be accommodated in my home?"

The Prophet (PBUH) added, "And he who enters the Kaba is safe."

Abu Sufyan pressed him further.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) continued, "And he who enters the mosque is safe."

Abu Sufyan was unrelenting, "How many can be accommodated in the mosque?"

The Prophet (PBUH) was generous, "And he who stays in his home, with his door locked is safe."

Abu Sufyan concluded, "This is certainly more than sufficient."

Although Abu Sufyan was ready to return to the people of Makkah to share this outcome, the Prophet (PBUH) wanted to ensure that Abu Sufyan had no doubts about what was to come. He requested his uncle to accompany Abu Sufyan to the lower valley to witness the march of the Muslim army toward the City.²⁰⁸

The Muslim army began its march. Abu Sufyan looked on in awe. Several units of the army represented each diverse tribe. The battalion which flanked the army had bright, gleaming armor and it was led by the Prophet (PBUH) himself. This was the convoy composed of the most loyal believers who had emigrated from Makkah at the very beginning as well as the Ansar.

Abu Sufyan inquired, "Al-'Abbas who are these?"

He responded, "This is Allah's Messenger at the head..."

Abu Sufyan remarked, "None can stand up to the force of this battalion...your nephew has certainly acquired a great kingdom!"

Al-'Abbas said coolly, "Woe to you. Abu Sufyan, he is a Prophet (PBUH), not a king."

Abu Sufyan responded, "Oh yes, indeed."

The Muslim army was organized into several divisions so that they could enter Makkah from all sides. The Ansari leader was at the head of a division composed of 4,000 from the Ansar. The well-known military general, Khalid, led the group of 700 men who had emigrated from Makkah. The remaining 5,300 soldiers came from various other tribes.

As he marched, the Ansari leader repeated, "Today is the day of death and destruction. Today the Kaba itself will no longer be sacred and will become permissible."

Abu Sufyan was surprised to hear that such a leader would dare to signal breaking the sanctity of the Kaba. He complained to the Prophet (PBUH).

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) responded, "He made a mistake."

The Prophet (PBUH) replaced the Ansari leader with a Qurayshi Muslim instead to minimize the chance for old hostilities to flare up. In an unprecedented move as a conqueror, he ordered the leader of each army division to not fight unless they were first attacked. The Prophet (PBUH) wanted to avoid bloodshed in this most holy of cities.

Al-'Abbas suggested to Abu Sufyan to make a swift return, warn the Quraysh, and share the conditions of safety. Abu Sufyan left. He felt very clearly now that surrendering was the only viable response for his tribe.

In Makkah, the people had received word from Abu Sufyan's two friends that the Muslim army had arrived near the outskirts of the City. They were anxious to learn more. As Abu Sufyan galloped on his horse, the people hurried toward him.

Abu Sufyan projected his voice, "People of Quraysh, Muhammad is approaching at the head of an army for which you are no match. He who enters Abu Sufyan's house is safe..."

His wife, Hind, was shocked to hear this. She rushed toward Abu Sufyan, smacked him, and twisted his beard. In the past, she had been very vocal in her hatred against the Muslims.

Hind screeched, "Kill this good-for-nothing fat man! What an evil leader he has been!"

Abu Sufyan kept his composure and responded, "Woe to you. Do not let this woman delude you. You are going to face something for which you are no match. He who goes into Abu Sufyan's house is safe..."

The people were discontent, saying, "Confound you! Of what avail would your house be to us?"

He added, "He who enters the mosque is safe, and he who stays in his own home, with his door locked, will be safe."

The people realized what they had to do, and hurried to the safe havens Abu Sufyan had described.

Wearing his armor and a red turban, the Prophet (PBUH) rode into Makkah on the 20th day of Ramadan, the month of fasting. He was so grateful to Allah that as he faced in the direction of the Kaba, he bowed his head so low that it almost touched the back of his camel. As a leader, this type of humbleness is unparalleled. He held his head in this position, praised Allah, and recalled the chapter entitled "The Victory" from the Quran.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) recited, "Verily, We have given you a manifest victory."²⁰⁹

Despite hopes for a completely peaceful takeover of the City, Khalid's army division was attacked by the son of Abu Jahl, Suhayl, and some of the Quraysh. This haphazard Qurayshi band was no match for Khalid's division and lost the skirmish, leaving 20 Qurayshi casualties and only two dead from the Muslims.

The Prophet (PBUH) was not happy to learn of this and said, "Have I not given clear orders to all units not to fight?"

He was informed that Khalid's division was attacked first and had to defend.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) responded, "Whatever Allah brings is good."²¹⁰

Once the takeover was complete, the Prophet (PBUH) went directly to the Kaba on his camel. When he reached, he touched the heavenly black stone resting in the Kaba with a staff.

In an audible manner, the Prophet (PBUH) said, "Allah is Great!"

The Muslims repeated after him, their voices reverberating throughout Makkah.

The Prophet (PBUH) circumscribed the Kaba seven times, touching the black stone with a staff each round. Every time he

pointed the staff in the direction of one of the over 300 idols around the Kaba, forward-facing idols fell forward while backward-facing idols fell backward. As the Prophet (PBUH) simply pointed without touching the idols, one by one, all of the idols around the Kaba miraculously toppled and were destroyed.²¹¹

As he did this, he repeated, "The truth is triumphant; falsehood is vanquished. Falsehood will always be vanquished."

The Prophet (PBUH) then made a prayer in the same spot that Prophet Abraham (PBUH) had prayed when he had finished building the Kaba centuries ago. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) then drank from the holy well of Zam Zam and washed with water. The Muslims around him again tried to catch the droplets falling from the Prophet (PBUH).

The Quraysh were astonished at the sight and remarked, "We have never heard of a king enjoying any comparable measure of love from his people!"

The Prophet (PBUH) asked for the keys of the Kaba and unlocked the doors. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) destroyed all of the idols that were inside of the Kaba. He also saw a questionable picture that someone had hung in the interior depicting Prophet Abraham (PBUH) drawing lots or gambling.

Upon seeing this, the Prophet (PBUH) said, "Confound them. They have made our great man draw lots. What has he got to do with drawing lots?"

The Prophet (PBUH) recited from the Quran, "Abraham was not a Jew nor yet a Christian; but he was true in Faith, and bowed his will to Allah's, and he joined not gods with Allah."²¹²

He ordered that the picture be removed, and Umar followed through.

When the Prophet (PBUH) was finished praying inside the House of Allah, he then stood at the Kaba's doors and declared to the people, "There is no deity other than Allah, who has fulfilled His promise, supported His servant, and defeated the confederate tribes on His own. No practice of pride or privilege nor any revenge or claim to any property is valid except that of the care of the Kaba and the

provision of drinking water to pilgrims. People of Quraysh, Allah has taken away from you the passionate pride of ignorance which made you attach great value and honor to your ancestors and value them highly. All people are the descendants of Adam, and Adam was created from clay."

The Prophet (PBUH) then beautifully recited from the Quran, "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well-acquainted."²¹³

He gently asked the Quraysh assembled before him, "What sort of judgment do you think I am going to pass against you?"

The Quraysh said, "A benevolent one. You are an honorable brother and the son of an honorable brother of ours."

Just as the Prophet Joseph (PBUH) emerged from difficulty to triumph and forgive his brothers long ago, so too did the Prophet (PBUH) forgive at his pinnacle.

He said to the Quraysh, "You may go free. You are all pardoned."

Only four individuals who had previously committed atrocious crimes were brought to justice and executed. Islam does not encourage vengeful bloodshed, nor does it promote senseless war. Thus with few exceptions, the vast majority of the Quraysh and people of Makkah were forgiven, even those who had fought against the Muslims in previous battles and even those who had schemed against the Prophet (PBUH) for many years past. During this conquest, the army did not take war booty nor did it confiscate land from the people of Makkah. It took an exceptional man like the Prophet (PBUH) to abstain from vengeance and rather show incredible mercy even for his most adversarial, former enemies. No other commander-in-chief was as forgiving and generous as the Prophet (PBUH) in light of such a victory. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sent as a mercy to the worlds – that of man, jinn, and all of existence.²¹⁴

When Islam was emerging, Bilal had been tortured but he stayed true to the faith. When the Muslims prevailed, he was honored

as the Prophet (PBUH) asked Bilal to stand at the top of the Kaba and give the call to prayer.

As he stood by the Kaba, the Prophet (PBUH) asked, "Where is Uthman ibn Talhah?"

When Uthman ibn Talhah appeared, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Go ahead and take your keys, oh Uthman. Today is the day of fulfilling the promises and giving back what is due."

The keys of the Kaba have remained with the descendants of Uthman ibn Talhah until this day.

The tribe of Bacr had previously massacred the people of Khuzaah, precipitating the conquest of Makkah. Thus, the Prophet (PBUH) allowed the tribe of Khuzaah to seek retaliation against the perpetrators for only a few hours during the hottest part of that day. He then forbade them from fighting the tribe of Bacr.

As the people absorbed what just transpired, they understood that one of their very own from the tribe of Quraysh, whom they had previously persecuted, attempted to assassinate, and driven out, had been rewarded by Allah and was now elevated to be the undisputed leader of Makkah. It also helped that the Prophet (PBUH) had impeccable lineage and was the grandson of one the most famous and well respected Arabs – 'Abd al-Muttalib. With the triumph of Islam, the majority of people in the City wanted to leave paganism and become Muslim. Just as he had first publically called people to Islam standing on mount Safa over two decades before, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was with Umar, sitting on the same mount now, as the crowds came to give their allegiance.

Allah revealed in the Quran –

"When comes the Help of Allah (to you, O Muhammad [PBUH] against your enemies) and the conquest (of Makkah),

"And you see that the people enter Allah's religion (Islam) in crowds,

“So glorify the Praises of your Lord, and ask for His Forgiveness. Verily, He is the One who accepts the repentance and forgives.”²¹⁵

The Prophet (PBUH) had achieved the pinnacle of his noble mission, and he knew that Allah was signaling to him that his journey in this life had reached the beginning of the end.

Headed to the Prophet (PBUH) on mount Safa, Abu Bakr's daughter – Asma – took her grandfather, Abu Bakr's father, by the hand to accept Islam.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) turned to Abu Bakr, “Why didn't you leave the old man? We would have come to him in his house.”

Abu Bakr responded, “I swear by Allah, oh Messenger of Allah, it is more befitting that he comes to you.”

When Abu Bakr's father put his hand in the Prophet's (PBUH) hand to take the oath of allegiance, Abu Bakr started to weep.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) asked, “Oh Abu Bakr, why are you crying? This is such a happy day that your father has accepted Islam.”

Abu Bakr explained, “Oh Messenger of Allah, how I wish that the hand that I am seeing now is the hand of your uncle, Abu Talib, rather than the hand of my own father.”²¹⁶

Abu Talib was the Prophet's (PBUH) dear guardian after his parents and grandfather passed away. It is truly amazing that Abu Bakr cared more about the happiness of the Prophet (PBUH) than his own.

Once the men of Makkah accepted Islam, the Prophet (PBUH) turned his attention to the women who wanted to embrace the faith too.

The women were asked to explicitly agree, “Not to ascribe divinity to anyone other than Allah, not to steal or commit adultery, not to kill their children, not to claim falsely that a child belongs to a certain father when it does not, and not to disobey the Prophet (PBUH) in anything reasonable he orders them.”²¹⁷

Abu Sufyan's wife, Hind, covered her face with a veil. At the Battle of Uhud, she had mutilated the Prophet's (PBUH) late Uncle

Humza. On this day though, Hind declared her Islam in front of the Prophet (PBUH), which wiped away all of her prior sins.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said to the women of Makkah, “Pledge to me that you will not ascribe divinity to anyone other than Allah.”

Hind had the audacity to remark, “You are certainly asking us to give you more than you asked the men.”

This was not true, but she accepted the condition.

He went on, “And not to steal.”

Hind recalled, “I used to take some money from Abu Sufyan, little by little behind his back. I did not know whether that was permissible or not.”

Abu Sufyan diffused the situation and reassured, “Whatever you have taken in the past is yours.”

The Prophet (PBUH) recognized, “Then you are Hind...?”

She acknowledged, “Yes, indeed. Forgive the past, may Allah forgive you.”

The Prophet (PBUH) carried on, “And not to commit adultery.”

Hind asked, “Messenger of Allah, would an honorable woman be an adulteress?”

He added, “And not to kill your children.”

She remembered, “We reared them from when they were young until they grew up, and then you and your companions killed them at (the Battle of) Badr.”²¹⁸

Umar was so surprised by the comment that he fell on his back laughing. The Prophet (PBUH) asked Umar to take the allegiance from the women.

The son of Abu Jahl fled after failing to execute a guerrilla attack against the Muslim advance. Deciding to go into exile, he traveled to a seaport and boarded a ship headed to Abyssinia. On the ride, a storm broke out and the situation became dire.

The ship captain who was a pagan announced, "We don't have the power to withstand this storm. For sure we are going to drown. So now is the time to pray to Allah for I swear by Allah, you and I both know that our gods are not going to help us at this point in time."

The son of Abu Jahl said, "It occurred to me then that if our gods will not help us when we need them, then why should we worship these gods when we don't need them? Oh Allah, I promise you, if you save me, I will accept Islam. I will go to your Messenger, I will put my hand in his hand, and I will find him to be forgiving and merciful."

Given all of the crimes that he had committed, the son of Abu Jahl returned to Makkah wrapping his face in a turban.

Upon reaching the Prophet (PBUH), the son of Abu Jahl removed his turban and said, "I bear witness that there is no god except Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His Messenger."

He shared his story from the ship, and the Prophet (PBUH) embraced him into the fold of Islam.

The Prophet (PBUH) stayed in Makkah for 19 days, setting up camp in a valley just minutes from the Kaba. He enacted a number of changes to the way of life in the City, both in personal and commercial spheres. Many people in Makkah conducted a lucrative business of fabricating wood, stone, or other materials into idols, and selling them to visiting pilgrims.²¹⁹

He said, "Allah and His Messenger forbid you from selling alcohol, carcasses, and idols."

Furthermore, the Prophet (PBUH) ordered that nobody should keep idols in their abode. The people of Makkah obeyed, breaking the remaining idols with axes and discarding their alcohol. The Prophet (PBUH) was also keen to wipe out idolatry throughout the Peninsula – the Arabian Peninsula. Thus, he sent a number of expeditions to adjacent lands to destroy any remaining public idols located in temples. These missions were successful in very short order. Makkah and the Arabian Peninsula were being restored from a place of idolatry back to the center of monotheism.

During his time in Makkah, the Prophet (PBUH) said, "Oh people, Allah has made Makkah sacred the day that He created the Heavens and the Earth, and it shall remain sacred until the Day of Judgement. It is not allowed for any believer who believes in Allah and the Last Day to shed any blood – human or animal. It is not allowed for people to pluck the leaves...Makkah was always sacred before me, and it shall be sacred after me. As for me, Allah lifted its sanctity for me to attack just for one hour of the day, and now it has returned to its sanctity as it was before. So if somebody says, 'But the Prophet (PBUH) fought in Makkah,' you respond back to him, 'Allah made it permissible for the Prophet (PBUH), and He has not made it permissible for you.'"²²⁰

38. Rally

Thaqif was the dominate tribe from the lush, fortified city of Taif, cradled between two mountains some distance from Makkah. Living a rural existence in the desert near Taif was the pagan tribe of Hawazin. With the conquest of Makkah, these pagan tribes watched in horror as Muslims grasped the heart of the Arabian Peninsula and its vital lifeblood. Immediately, it dawned upon the neighboring Thaqif and Hawazin that the end of idolatry was drawing near. Trying to use the political coup in Makkah to their advantage, the tribe of Thaqif schemed to seize the custodianship of the Kaba now that the Quraysh had been vanquished. The senior members of the pagan tribes met, discussed the situation, and decided to take the path toward war.

Malik ibn Awf, the young chief of Hawazin, called upon many tribes to join him in battle until they amassed 20,000 men in a valley. Even with such strength, some of Ibn Awf's military tactics raised a few eyebrows.

A former chieftain and wise man of an allying tribe asked Ibn Awf in the army's camp, "You have now assumed the leadership of your people. This is a day which will have a bearing on the future. I hear noises of domestic animals, such as sheep and donkeys, and I hear young children crying. Can you tell me why that is?"

"I have asked the people to bring their property and their families with them!" Ibn Awf responded, "I want every soldier to know that his family and his wealth is right behind him so that he fights hard to protect them."

The wise man rebuked him, "You are no more than a shepherd. What would stop a fighter fleeing from the battle? If you are winning, no one will be of use to you except a man who can carry a sword or a spear. If you are losing, you will bring on your people the greatest scandal of all, and they will lose all their property."

When the wise man was then told that specific tribes known for being highly adept at warfare had not joined Malik Ibn Awf's force, he reacted, "Courage and determination are absent. They would not have been absent if the score was of glory. I would have preferred you to follow their example..."

"Malik, you cannot achieve much by bringing the whole of the Hawazin to the battlefield. You would be better advised to put them in their well-protected areas before meeting the Muslims on your horses. If you win, your people will join you. If you lose, you will have saved your families and your property!"

The 30-year-old Ibn Awf was stubborn in his position, "By God, I would not do that! You have aged, and so has your reason."

Turning to the people, he announced, "People of Hawazin, you will either follow my orders, or I shall fall on this sword of mine until it pierces right through me!"²²¹

Meanwhile, the Prophet (PBUH) learned that the Hawazin were preparing for war. He sent a scout forward, confirmed that the opposing army would march to the valley of Hunayn, and behind them would be their families and property.

The Prophet (PBUH) called his friends, shared the latest development, and asked for their advice. Many of them were surprised to learn that another battle could be on the horizon.

After a silence, Umar suggested that perhaps the scout had made a mistake.

The scout became upset and said, "Perhaps if you think I am wrong, remember you also thought somebody better than me was wrong as well."

The scout, in his resentment, resurfaced the time when Umar questioned the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

As emotions ran high, Umar said to the Prophet (PBUH), "Oh Messenger (PBUH) of Allah, look at what he said!"

"Indeed, oh Umar," the Prophet (PBUH) said, "you were misguided, and Allah guided you to Islam."²²²

As war loomed on the horizon, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) strategically planned several steps ahead. Since the opposing people from the fortified city of Taif were involved, there was a chance that the Muslims would have to lay siege and use new weaponry. Thus, he sent a few trusted friends to another tribe to learn how to build and operate catapults and battering rams.

Preparing for battle, the Prophet (PBUH) borrowed weapons, shields, and armor for the army. Once he had gathered the original army of 10,000 Muslims along with 2,000 from Makkah – some of whom were non-Muslim – they set out. As they marched, several people felt proud of their large numbers as an army.

One of the Muslim soldiers remarked, "How can we possibly be destroyed when we are 12,000 [strong]?"

Word reached the Prophet (PBUH) about such boasting, and he cautioned, "Do not say this. For verily, there was a Prophet from amongst the Prophets who looked at his army, and he felt arrogant and proud. As he looked, Allah sent a pestilence, and the army was defeated without even meeting an opponent in the battlefield."

Given the large quantity of warriors, the Muslims reached Hunayn four days later in the evening. To get ready for the battle the next morning, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) arranged the warriors in

ranks, handed out the flags, and selected commanders. He appointed Khalid as the leader of the cavalry.

When a Muslim scout reported back that the enemy had brought a large quantity of cattle, property, and even their families to the battlefield, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) smiled and optimistically said, "Tomorrow this will be the war spoils that we will take, if Allah wills."

Enjoying a head start, enemy forces purposely selected a valley with a steep incline and several narrow points along the pass. Ibn Awf instructed archers to climb to elevated points on each side of the sloping path, hide in nooks, and await the signal to unleash arrows on the Muslim army. He further ordered foot soldiers to concentrate their attack at the top, once the Muslims had expended energy to hike up, exposing warriors for the opposing marksmen.

The Prophet (PBUH) commanded the army to march at dawn. Khalid led the cavalry in the front. Then came the foot soldiers in the middle. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) rode his white mule at the end of the army. Wearing two shields as body armor, he was surrounded by his friends and relatives. As the Muslims entered the sloping path, they met opposing soldiers and engaged them in fighting.

The Hawazin and their allies had planned to act out an early retreat, giving the impression of defeat. The Muslim army fell for the rouse and rushed forward. The enemy gave the signal and arrows rained down on the surprised Muslims. There was chaos, with a sea of armored bodies clamoring through a narrow passageway, jostling for protection from the downpour of arrows. While the Muslims enacted a panicked retreat, the enemy sent in their foot soldiers to chase down the Muslims. As he saw many of the poorly armed, new believers and allied non-Muslims flee, the Prophet (PBUH) bravely continued to advance toward the enemy.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stood up on his mule and appealed to the Muslims, "Come to me! I am the Messenger of Allah. I am Muhammad, the son of Abdullah!"

A distant cousin of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who had recently become Muslim, saw the Prophet (PBUH) without significant reinforcements. The cousin was bitter from losing his father in the

Battle of Uhud and impulsively decided it was an opportune moment to take revenge. Holding his spear firmly, he galloped toward the rear of the Prophet (PBUH), intending to kill him. Unexpectedly, an intense light shone on his cousin, forcing him to close his eyes and scream.

The Prophet (PBUH) turned around and upon witnessing the situation, he mercifully raised his hands and supplicated to Allah for Satan to leave the heart of his cousin and for him to be guided. Faith shone into his cousin's heart, and the fog of revenge dissipated from him forever. He turned and fought alongside the Muslims.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was in a precarious situation, with only a few of his most trusted friends and family by his side.

Upon seeing the deserters leave, a Muslim woman jumped off her mount and ran to the Prophet's (PBUH) side. She retrieved a hand dagger and stood ready to defend him. The Prophet (PBUH) and his friends looked at her in amazement.

The brave Muslim woman declared, "If anybody comes, I am going to shove it in his stomach!"

The Prophet (PBUH) requested his Uncle, Al-'Abbas, who had a booming voice, to call out to the people of al-Hudaybia, then to the Ansar, and to the original emigrants who had fled Makkah. Al-'Abbas called out to the specific tribes by name to come back to battle. The Muslims awoke as though from some type of slumber and gradually returned to aid Allah's Messenger (PBUH).

The Prophet (PBUH) resolutely said, "I am the Prophet. There is no lie about this. I am the grandson of 'Abd al-Muttalib."

His slogan resonated, motivating all those who loved Islam as well as those who still had strong tribal loyalties. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) predicated that pride of one's ancestors would remain in the Muslim community until the end of time, and he appealed to this psychology. His reference to 'Abd al-Muttalib – one of the most famous Arabs of the time – was an effective tactic to remind them of his highly respected lineage.

As the Muslims rallied for a counter attack, the Prophet (PBUH) picked up some dust and threw it at enemy forces, which miraculously obscured their vision for a time.

He said, "May their faces be disfigured!"

The opposing archers stopped firing arrows as they were temporarily blinded.

Allah says in the Quran, "Truly Allah has given you victory on many battle fields; and on the Day of Hunayn, when you rejoiced at your great number, but it availed you naught, and the earth, vast as it is, was straitened for you, then you turned back in flight. Then Allah did send down His tranquility on the Messenger [PBUH], and on the believers, and sent down forces [angels] which you saw not, and punished the disbelievers..."²²³

True victory comes by having faith and trust in Allah, not by solely relying on one's own preparation or strength in numbers. It was Allah who descended a big, black cloud from the heavens, spreading on the battlefield like ants. An army of angels had been sent to aid the believers.

Around sunrise, the returning Muslims gained the momentum and caused the tribes of Hawazin, Thaqif, and their allies to flee. Their young commander, Ibn Awf, as well as the tribe of Thaqif escaped up the mountain to the fortified city of Taif.

The enemy left behind their families, cattle, and property, which the Prophet (PBUH) instructed be relocated to a valley near Makkah. The war spoils were guarded until Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) could return to take charge of the distribution.

Although the opposition had fled, the Prophet (PBUH) did not want them to regroup and surprise attack the Muslims again. Thus, he ordered the army organize into smaller groups and pursue the remainder of the enemy who had not taken refuge in Taif. A number of mini battles broke out in different regions, and the Muslims were victorious. Although they suffered few casualties, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali were all wounded in the battle.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) came across a woman from the opposing side who was slain by the group led by Khalid. The Prophet (PBUH) sent a representative to Khalid, firmly ordering that neither he nor the Muslim forces were to kill women, children, or the elderly in battle. It is prohibited in Islam.

A woman from the prisoners of war shouted, "How dare you treat me like this. Don't you know? I am the sister of your own friend."

The Muslims asked, "What do you mean?"

"I am his foster sister," she explained.

The Muslims reported the claim to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

He requested, "Bring her to me."

When she was brought near, she said, "I am Shayma."

The Prophet (PBUH) had not seen her since childhood.

He asked, "How do I know you are Shayma?"

She responded, "I still have the mark on my back where you bit me one time I was carrying you!"

The Prophet (PBUH) laughed and said, "I have two choices for you. Either you stay with us, we shall treat you honorably, and you shall be beloved; or I shall gift you and you go back to your tribe."

She chose the latter and returned to her tribe.

The Muslim army marched to Taif. There, they laid siege to the city, which proved to be a grim endeavor. From the outset, Thaqif had access to plenty of water, food, and supplies to last them one year.

At first, the Muslims camped too near to Thaqif's fortress and were showered with arrows from the enemy. The Prophet (PBUH) ordered they camp at a distance.

To safely approach the thick walls surrounding Taif, the Muslims built a protective wooden cover that could shield several warriors. They marched underneath it and were foiled again when the pagans threw down burning oil, penetrating the cover and hurting several Muslims. As they returned to camp, the nonbelievers launched arrows that killed several men.

Given how challenging it was to breach the walls of Taif, the Prophet (PBUH) suggested that the Muslims leave and return sometime later. Some in the army insisted on staying in the hopes of

achieving another victory. They started setting fire to the crops outside of the city.

Witnessing their burning agricultural land and buckling under the psychological warfare, the people of Thaqif begged, "We ask you by Allah, by our blood, and by our rights as neighbors, please don't do this!"

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) relented and forbade the Muslims from burning any more crops around Taif.

He announced to the Thaqif and their allies hiding in the fortress that anyone who joined the Muslims would be safe and protected. Furthermore, slaves who defected would gain their freedom. At night, many slaves responded to the call, left Taif, and embraced Islam.

After being attacked by another round of arrows and sustaining some more casualties, the Prophet (PBUH) called upon the army to withdraw. This time, the Muslims agreed. The siege lasted less than two weeks.²²⁴

"Oh Messenger of Allah," the Muslims asked, "pray against Thaqif!"

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) raised his hands and the Muslims did the same.

The Prophet (PBUH) implored with mercy, "Oh Allah, guide the people of Thaqif. Oh Allah, bring the people of Thaqif to us."

The Prophet (PBUH) turned his attention to the valley which had the war spoils, including 24,000 camels, 40,000 sheep, and 4,000 silver ounces. There were also 6,000 women and children who had been abandoned by the opposition. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) waited for several weeks, hoping that the Hawazin would return to negotiate and get back their families, cattle, and property. When enough time had passed and the tribe did not show up, he proceeded with distribution of the large quantity of wealth. Rather than set up refugee camps, the Prophet (PBUH) assigned the families to different Muslims to be integrated into their society and be treated humanely.

Abu Sufyan had led the Quraysh in many battles against the Muslims and had previously even attempted to assassinate the Prophet (PBUH) on multiple occasions.

Looking out at the spoils of the battle of Hunayn, however, he admitted, "Messenger of Allah, you have become the richest among the Quraysh!"

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) simply smiled.

Abu Sufyan asked, "Give me some of this, Messenger of Allah."

The Prophet (PBUH) instructed, "Bilal, weigh 40 ounces of silver for Abu Sufyan and give him 100 camels."

This was a fortune that most could only dream about.

Although Abu Sufyan was thrilled, he requested, "What about my son, Yazid?"

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) ordered Bilal, "Weigh for Yazid 40 ounces of silver and give him 100 camels."

Giddy, Abu Sufyan continued, "And my son Muawiyah..."

The Prophet (PBUH) gifted another 40 ounces of silver and 100 camels for his other son.

Abu Sufyan said, "You are indeed very generous. May my parents be sacrificed for your sake! I fought you and you were the most honorable of foes, and I have made peace with you and you have proved to be the best of friends. May Allah reward you with His best blessings."²²⁵

The Prophet (PBUH) gifted 100 camels to each of several other individuals, especially to newer Muslims from different tribes to strengthen their resolve in Islam. He was so generous that he gave 300 camels to a non-Muslim named Safwan ibn Umayyah, seeking to win his heart.

Then the Prophet (PBUH) stood next to Safwan, before a land which held an impressive herd of cattle from the spoils of Hunayn.

The Prophet (PBUH) asked, "Do you like this piece of land...?"

Safwan responded, "Yes, indeed."

"It is yours," the Prophet (PBUH) said, "with all that is in it."

Safwan gasped, "Kings do not make such gifts willingly. No one can give so generously except a Prophet. I declare that there is no god except Allah, and Muhammad is his Messenger."

He also later said, "Allah's Messenger was the most hateful person to me, but he continued to give me of the spoils of the Battle of Hunayn until he was dearer to me than any creature on the face of the earth."

Whatever wealth remained was distributed to many of the Muslim warriors. Foot soldiers were each given either four camels or 40 sheep. Members of the cavalry were each awarded three times as much as foot soldiers because the care of horses was a significant expense.

An arrogant man came to the Prophet (PBUH) and demanded, "Oh Muhammad, be fair with this money!"

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) responded, "Woe to you. Who will be just if I am not just on this earth?"

The detractor said, "This is a distribution that you are not doing for the sake of Allah."

The detractor ascribed to a type of ultra-fanaticism that will be present until the Day of Judgment.

The Prophet (PBUH) kept his cool and asked, "Will you not trust me when the One who is in the Heavens trusts me?"

The man abruptly walked away. Umar had witnessed the exchange and asked the Prophet (PBUH) if he could execute the man.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not allow Umar to kill him, but rather warned the Muslims, "Woe to me if the people start saying that I kill my own followers... From his ilk will come a group of people that will recite the Quran but it will not leave their throats. You will think that their prayer is better than your prayer, and their charity is better than your charity, and their actions of worship are better than

your actions of worship, yet they will leave Islam like an arrow leaves the target...These people are the worst of the people."²²⁶

Not everyone was given a gift after Hunayn.

The young of the Ansar said, "When there is war, we are told to come, and when there is [war] booty and money, we are nowhere to be found."

The chief of the Ansar came to the Prophet (PBUH) and said, "Messenger of Allah, these clans of the Ansar have taken your action to heart."

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) asked, "What action?"

The Ansari chief responded, "The way you have distributed those spoils of war among your own people and the other Arabian tribes. No such gifts were made to any person among the Ansar."

The Prophet (PBUH) inquired, "What is your own stand?"

The Ansari chief admitted, "I am only one of my people."

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) requested that only the people of the Ansar be assembled in a tent and to ensure that no other tribe be present. So many people were in attendance that many stood outside of the tent.

The Ansari chief reported, "Messenger of Allah, the Ansar have assembled where you have instructed me to gather them for you."

When he arrived to address them, the Prophet (PBUH) praised Allah, and then he asked, "People of the Ansar, what is this which has been reported to me that you have been saying? And what are you aggrieved about?"

"Did I not come to you when you were astray, and Allah has guided you to the right path? Did I not find you poor, and Allah has given you of His riches? Did I not come to you when you were at war, and Allah has united your hearts?"

The Ansar responded, "Indeed. We have been graced with great bounties by Allah and His Messenger."

The Prophet (PBUH) asked, "Why do you not answer me, people of the Ansar?"

They reacted, "How shall we answer you, Messenger of Allah? We are greatly indebted to Allah and to His Messenger."

The Prophet (PBUH) then gave one of his most eloquent, powerful statements, "You can, if you wish, say what is true and what people will believe, 'You came to us when people denied your message, and we have accepted it. You were rejected, without support and shouldering a heavy burden when you came to us, and we have given you welcome and support, and have also lightened your burden.'"

"People of the Ansar, are you aggrieved at a trifle of this world which I have given out to certain people in order to win their hearts over to Islam and left you to rely on your faith? Are you not satisfied, people of the Ansar, that other people should go to their quarters with sheep and camels while you go back to your own quarters with Allah's Messenger?"

"By Him who holds Muhammad's soul in His hand, had it not been for my emigration I would have been one of the Ansar. If all people went one way and the Ansar went another way, I would take the way of the Ansar.

"My Lord, shower your mercy on the Ansar, and the Ansar's children, and the children of their children!"

As the Prophet (PBUH) spoke, the Ansar were so touched that they felt tears streaming down their faces, and their beards became wet.

The Ansar said, "We are satisfied with Allah's Messenger as our share."²²⁷

By the time the Prophet (PBUH) was finished with the distribution of war spoils, he did not leave anything for himself. He was so generous that he had no fear of poverty. It was at this point that the Hawazin returned, wanting to embrace Islam and get back what they had lost.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) asked them which was dearer to them: their families or their wealth.

They responded, "Messenger of Allah, are you giving us a choice between our families and our wealth? Our women and children are certainly dearer to us."

The Prophet (PBUH) reassured them, "My own share and the share of my clan, the Abd al-Muttalib, are yours."

He then advised them how to claim the women and children who had been taken as war spoils by others, "When I have finished the congregational prayers, stand up and say, 'We appeal by Allah's Messenger to the Muslims, and we appeal by the Muslims to Allah's Messenger, to release our women and children.' When you do that I will give you what I can, and I will ask others to give you what they can as well."

The next day after the prayers, when numerous Muslims were present, representatives from Hawazin made the appeal as had been discussed. Then the Prophet (PBUH) announced that the people of Hawazin had asked for forgiveness and had become Muslims. He instructed his own clan to return their shares back to Hawazin. Many other tribes followed suit.

There were, however, some rural tribes which refused to give up any of their war spoils unless they were further compensated.

The Prophet (PBUH) was able to secure the release of all the families of the Hawazin when he offered to the stubborn tribes, "He of you who wants to hold to his right will be given instead of what he has now six shares of the first spoils of war we gain."

The Prophet (PBUH) asked the Hawazin, "Where is your leader, Malik ibn Awf?"

They responded, "He managed to get into Taif."

Although Ibn Awf had been the one who organized the opposition at the Battle of Hunayn, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Go tell him that if he comes to me as a Muslim, I shall return his family and property plus give him 100 camels."

Word reached Ibn Awf, and he came to the Prophet (PBUH) to embrace Islam. The Prophet (PBUH) decided to forgive and mercifully restore Ibn Awf as the chieftain of the tribe of Hawazin.

What other nation so effectively and elegantly transformed an enemy of the state into an ardent ally in such a short period of time?

Before re-entering Makkah, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) went into the state of consecration, dressing in two plain, white cloths and proclaiming the oneness of Allah. When he arrived at the Kaba, he performed the small pilgrimage. Then the Prophet (PBUH), along with the Ansar and other Muslims, traveled back to Madinah.

39. Rematch with The Romans

Just over two decades ago, the sands of Arabia were soiled by the cold blood of baby girls, buried alive by fathers too ashamed to lay claim to female children. People would eat carrion and wash down their rotten meals with liquor, sprawling drunk in the streets. The strong preyed upon the weak, and tribes fought each other tooth and nail over feuds that outdated their memories.

By the ninth year following the emigration to Madinah, the Arabian Peninsula had transformed from a place of divided tribes and factions to a land with the great majority of its people loyal to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It was the first time ever that the Arabian clans had united under the common banner of the Islamic nation state. There was peace and a new way of life, infusing the hearts of people with mercy and bringing guidance to a society that previously had little.

Sixth months after the siege of Taif, Allah commanded the Prophet (PBUH) to battle the Northern tribe of Ghassan and its ally, the Roman Empire. Given the formidable enemy, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) sent representatives to all tribes in Arabia, conveying the

order that all able bodied men – rich or poor – join his army. For a Muslim man to disobey this call was a major sin. Unlike most other battles where he purposely kept the destination a surprise, the Prophet (PBUH) made it known where they were going. He wanted the warriors to make adequate preparations, as this would be a test of wills.²²⁸

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stood in the mosque and called on the Muslims to donate whatever they could for what would be called the Expedition of Tabuk. He motivated the believers by signaling that whoever financed the expedition, they will be rewarded with Paradise in the next life.

The Expedition of Tabuk was straining on multiple levels. The destination was just outside of the Roman Empire, which was approximately 620 miles away— an incredibly long and time consuming journey. It was also the hottest part of the summer, where the sweltering heat could kill a person as temperatures commonly ran well above 100°F. Furthermore, the agricultural harvest season was near, which meant that many of the soldiers would have to sacrifice a significant amount of their annual livelihood to join the army, unless special arrangements were made for others to perform the harvest on their behalf.

To mount such an unprecedented military effort, the Muslims had to overcome the relative poverty that existed in their community and gather as much food, water, camels, and other resources as possible. The response to the Prophet's (PBUH) call to fundraise was tremendous. The largest contribution came from Uthman ibn Affan, who had just returned from a trading journey with 100 camels and lots of gold coins. He donated all of this money for the Expedition of Tabuk.

When Uthman poured his gold coins in front of the Prophet (PBUH) in the mosque, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "I swear by Allah, whatever Uthman does after today, it is not going to harm him."²²⁹

Umar was elated to be called upon for donations, for it was a time when he happened to be better-off financially than others in the community. He especially desired to compete with his friend, Abu

Bakr, in donating more for the sake of Allah. Umar went and gathered a considerable amount of money, which amounted to half his wealth. He then went to the Prophet (PBUH) and presented him with the money. Abu Bakr also came, and humbly donated to the cause.

The Prophet (PBUH) looked at his two close friends. In his wisdom, the Prophet (PBUH) smiled and asked Abu Bakr how much he had left for himself and his family?

Abu Bakr responded sincerely, "I left them Allah and His Messenger."

Abu Bakr had donated *all* of his wealth for the sake of Allah! The Prophet (PBUH) turned to Umar and asked him the same question. It dawned upon Umar that his friend's donation was indeed weightier than his own.

While Abu Bakr's generosity and trust in Allah were exceptional, Muslims are not expected to donate all of their wealth for the cause of Islam. They are also instructed to fulfill the needs of their family and other responsibilities.

This was in stark contrast to the stingy response of the hypocrites, who mocked the donors and gave nothing for the war effort. They made all sorts of ridiculous excuses on why they could not participate in the expedition. The most bizarre one came from Ibn Ubayy's friend, named al-Jadd.

The Prophet (PBUH) asked him, "Are you not interested in going to fight the Romans?"²³⁰

Al-Jadd responded, "I would rather you excuse me and not put me to such a severe test. My people know very well that no man is more infatuated by women than I am. I fear that if I see the Roman women and their beauty, I may not be able to resist the temptation."²³¹

Allah once again exposed the falsehood and treachery of the hypocrites, who instead did their own fundraising to build a physical outpost of dissent. An exiled hypocrite residing in Rome convinced Ibn Ubayy – head of the hypocrites – to make a base in Madinah from which they could revolt, and together with the Roman military, overthrow the Islamic nation state. Later, when the Muslims returned

from the Expedition of Tabuk, Allah commanded that the structure be destroyed, and the Prophet (PBUH) directed a few Muslims to extinguish the outlandish plot.

Given that they could be encountering the forces of the Roman superpower and its allies, the Prophet (PBUH) assembled the largest Muslim army ever to be raised in Arabia up until that time. The Muslim warriors responded obediently, so much so that it was difficult to count or list all of their names. They then marched to the outskirts of Madinah.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had instructed Ali, his cousin and close friend, to stay behind in Madinah to look after the Prophet's (PBUH) family. Despite the fact that Ali was recognized as a brave soldier whose feats in battle were epic, the hypocrites falsely teased Ali that the Prophet (PBUH) felt he was not a fit warrior and was thus not being brought along on the expedition! The slander affected him, and he decided to suit up for war. Ali galloped to the Prophet (PBUH) and the army.

"Oh Messenger of Allah," Ali said to him, "are you leaving me with the women and children while the hypocrites are mocking me? They are saying that you have only left me behind because you think I am not qualified to be fighting in the battlefield."²³²

"They are telling lies," the Prophet (PBUH) consoled Ali. "I have asked you to stay in order to look after those I left behind. Go back, then, and take care of my family and yours. Are you not satisfied, Ali, to be with me in the same relationship as Aaron was with Moses? The only difference is that there can be no Prophet after me."

Ali was put at ease and soon returned to Madinah, obeying the Prophet (PBUH).

Near the "hill of farewell," just outside of Madinah, the army looked ahead to the arduous march beyond the horizon. There, the Prophet (PBUH) rearranged the army into battalions, assigned each with a leader, and distributed flags. The divisions were ordered according to tribes, so that warriors could fight alongside people with whom they were most comfortable. Although the Prophet (PBUH)

never received any formal military training, he was blessed with incredible leadership and organizational skills.

They marched for a long while, and one day the army ran out of food rations and water. Two or more warriors were given one date to split. They would save the date seed to suck on it.

Umar was so thirsty that he felt as though he was going to die. Others scarified their precious camels which were necessary for travel just to drink the small amount of water contained within their animals. It meant that some of them would not have a mount for the return journey, forcing them to walk back in the blazing heat. The hardship became so severe that Abu Bakr asked the Prophet (PBUH) to supplicate to Allah. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) raised his hands to pray and kept them up until it miraculously rained, allowing the warriors to fill up their canisters with water. This miracle happened several times on the way to Tabuk, at their destination, and on the way back to Madinah.²³³

One day after the morning prayer, the warriors rode their camels, and many of them fell asleep as the sun rose. The believers, in their drowsiness, started to scatter. Muadh ibn Jabal, a believer in the army, stayed close to the Prophet (PBUH). The camel of Muadh ibn Jabal stumbled, but managed to recover. This startled the camel of the Prophet (PBUH), causing it to leap forward. The Prophet (PBUH) removed the turban he had wrapped around his head for protection from the sun, to see what had happened.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) called, "Oh, Muadh!"

"Hear I am, oh Prophet of Allah," Muadh responded.

The Prophet (PBUH) said, "Come here."

Muadh nudged his mount toward the Prophet (PBUH) and came close enough until the saddles of their camels were touching.

"I didn't realize that the people are so separated from us," the Prophet (PBUH) observed.

"Oh Prophet of Allah," Muadh said, "the people became sleepy, and their camels took them helter-skelter."

The Prophet (PBUH) admitted, "And I too was sleeping!"

Muadh found himself virtually alone with the Messenger (PBUH).

Taking advantage of the privacy, he asked, "Oh Messenger of Allah, give me permission to ask you something. A question has caused me to ponder until I fell sick thinking about it."

"Ask whatever you want," Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) responded.

Muadh said, "Oh Prophet of Allah, tell me what I can do to enter Paradise – something that only you can tell me."

The Prophet (PBUH) was amazed and remarked thrice, "You have asked a great matter."

He continued, "It is an easy thing if Allah wants good for you. You believe in Allah and the Last Day, and you offer the prayer, and you worship Allah alone, and you do this until you die upon this."

Muadh ibn Jabal requested, "Oh Messenger of Allah, repeat this for me."

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did so, and then he offered, "If you want, oh Muadh, then I will inform you about the head of this matter and the pillar and the pinnacle."

"Yes, of course," Muadh eagerly responded, "may my mother and father be given in your ransom!"

The Prophet (PBUH) said, "The head of this matter is you bear witness that there is no god except Allah, alone, without partner, and Muhammad is His servant and Messenger. The pillar of this whole matter is praying and giving charity."

Muadh listened carefully, riding alongside the Messenger (PBUH) through the arid desert, each step bringing them closer to a formidable enemy and a charged military encounter. Their camels kicked up dust and the Prophet (PBUH) continued with his advice to Muadh –

"The pinnacle is war for the sake of Allah. And I have been commanded to fight these people until they establish the prayer, give charity, and they testify, 'There is no god except Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger.' If they do that, then their lives and

properties are protected in the rights of Allah, may He be praised and exalted.”

The people he was referring to were the Romans, in the context of the Expedition of Tabuk.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) continued, “I swear by the One in whose hands is my soul, no face becomes tired, nor does a foot become dusty in any deed that will raise it higher in Paradise after the obligatory prayer like war in the way of Allah, may He be praised and exalted. Nothing makes the scales heavier like spending money upon an animal that is in the way of Allah or transporting people in the way of Allah.”²³⁴

After a long journey, the army arrived near the border of the Roman Empire at the Spring of Tabuk, which had nearly dried out. The Prophet (PBUH) had instructed the army not to touch the water. A few soldiers disobeyed him and used the water. The Prophet (PBUH) was not pleased and rebuked them. He proceeded to put some water in his mouth and returned it back into the remaining pool. It was not long before the Spring of Tabuk miraculously gushed forth, supplying water for the large Muslim army and their camels to drink.

The next morning after praying, the Prophet (PBUH) addressed the warriors. He first praised Allah and then proceeded to shower them with gems of wisdom.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, “The most truthful of all speech is the Book of Allah. The firmest handhold is righteous speech. The best of all paths and ways is that of Abraham (PBUH). The best deeds and sayings are that of Muhammad (PBUH). The best thing you can say is the remembrance of Allah. The best of all stories are those in the Quran.

“The best of all deeds are the ones that are done with the most sincerity and dedication. The worst of all deeds are those that are innovations [fabrications].

“The best guidance is the guidance of the Prophets. The best death is that of a martyr. The most blind of blindnesses is to be misguided after Allah has guided you. The best of deeds is that which

benefits you in this world and the next. The best knowledge is that which is followed. The worst blindness is that of the heart.

“The higher hand [philanthropist] is better than the lower hand [receiver of charity]. That which is little [in money] and suffices you is better than that which is a lot and distracts you.

“The worst excuse is the one you give at the time of death. The most evil of regrets is the one on the Day of Judgment.

“There are those people who don’t come to the Friday prayer at all except on rare occasions. There are those who don’t remember Allah but with reluctance.

“Of the worst of all sins is a lying tongue. The best richness is that of the heart. The best provision is that of piety. The pinnacle of wisdom is to fear Allah, may He be praised and exalted. The best thing that settles in the heart is certainty.

“Alcohol is the root of all evil. Women are the for-bringers of Satan for men. The worst of all income is that of interest [from debt]. The worst thing to eat is the property of an orphan.

“The fortunate person is the one who learns from the mistakes of others. To curse a believer is a sin, and to fight him is disbelief. To backbite is a disobedience to Allah. The sanctity of his money is like the sanctity of his blood.

“Whoever asks for forgiveness, Allah will forgive. Whoever controls his anger, Allah will reward. Whoever is patient at a calamity, Allah will give him better than what was taken away. Whoever acts to show off, Allah disgraces him. Whoever is patient, Allah will give him more.

“Oh Allah, forgive me and my community.”²³⁵

On another day, while still on the journey, and after prayer, the Prophet (PBUH) said to the Muslims, “Today Allah has given me five things that He has not given anyone before me –

“[1:] I have been sent to all of mankind, and those before me were only sent to their people.

"[2:] I have been helped by Allah to the distance of one month's journey that the enemy will be frightened of me.

"[3:] War spoils have been made permissible for me, and it was not permissible for those before me.

"[4:] The whole earth has been made a means of purification and a place of prayer. Therefore anyone of my followers can pray wherever the time of a prayer is due. The previous communities [e.g. Jews] could only pray in their houses of worship.

"[5:] What is the fifth one? Allah told me, 'Ask whatever you want.' I decided to save my request for you until the Day of Judgment, and so any of you who says, 'There is no god except Allah,' will get that fifth one."^{236,237}

On the Last Day, when each person will be brought forth to account for their actions before their Creator, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) requested reprieve for his community of believers. As the final Prophet (PBUH), he asked to be able to intercede for mercy on behalf of Muslims before Allah, Master of the Day of Judgement.

As the Prophet of Allah (PBUH), he was told some of what was to come in the future, and shared these prophecies with the Muslims.

He predicted that, "The Muslims shall inherit the treasures of the Empires of Rome and Persia."

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Count six things before the Day of Judgment: [1:] my death, [2:] conquest of Jerusalem, [3:] two plagues that will eliminate you like the plague that afflicts sheep, [4:] the increase of wealth to such an extent that even if one is given 100 dinars, he will not be satisfied; then [will come] an affliction which no Muslim house will escape, [5:] you will have a truce between yourselves and the Romans [or their descendants], who will betray you and attack you under eighty flags. Under each flag will be twelve thousand soldiers."^{238,239}

With the Muslim army amassed just outside of his empire, the Roman Emperor Heraclius located a Christian Arab who he sent as an ambassador with a responsive letter for the Prophet (PBUH).

Heraclius instructed the ambassador in detail, "I want you to monitor three things. Number one: does he mention the letters that he sends to me and the other kings? Number two: does he mention the night when my letter is read to him? Number three: see if he has something strange on his back."

The ambassador traveled and reached the Prophet (PBUH), who was sitting with his friends at the Spring of Tabuk.

The representative asked the warriors, "Where is your leader?"

He could not tell him apart because the Prophet (PBUH) was dressed modestly like the other Muslims and had neither a throne nor a crown.

The warriors responded, "He is over there."

The ambassador sat next to the Prophet (PBUH) and gave him the letter from Emperor Heraclius. The Prophet (PBUH) did not ask for it to be read immediately.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) first asked, "Who are you?"

"The Caesar has sent me," the ambassador responded.

The Prophet (PBUH) advised, "Why don't you embrace Islam, the faith of your forefather, Abraham."

"I am an ambassador of a nation right now," the ambassador said, "and my people have their religion. I will not embrace another religion...I will go back and think about this matter."

The Prophet (PBUH) laughed and recited from the Quran, "You do not guide those whom you love, but rather Allah guides those who He pleases."²⁴⁰

Before opening the letter, the Prophet (PBUH) said, "I sent my letter to the ruler of Persia, but he tore it up. So Allah will tear his kingdom up. I sent my letter to the Caesar, and he protected it. So Allah will protect his kingdom [for a time]."

The ambassador witnessed the first sign.

Heraclius' letter was opened, and Muawiyah – son of Abu Sufyan – read a section, "Your envoy told us that your Book describes a Paradise that is as broad as the skies and the earth. If Paradise is as

big as the skies and the earth, where according to your religion is Hell?"

The Prophet (PBUH) exclaimed, "Glory to Allah! Where do you think the night goes when the day comes?"

The ambassador witnessed the second sign.

It was the political custom of the time to give a visiting ambassador a gift, but the Prophet (PBUH) was traveling and did not have many material possessions with him. Uthman ibn Affan stepped up and generously gave the representative a yellow garment.

The next day, the ambassador hoped to get a glimpse of the Prophet's (PBUH) back. When he decided it was time to return to Rome, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) called the ambassador over and lowered his shirt. The representative witnessed the third sign as he saw the Prophet's (PBUH) beautiful, raised birthmark. It was the size of a pigeon egg with uniquely colored hair, symmetrically situated between his shoulder blades. It was the seal of the Last Messenger (PBUH).

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Go and tell your Caesar what you have seen."

Having witnessed all three signs, the ambassador returned to report back to Emperor Heraclius.^{241,242}

The Roman army did not show up to battle the Muslims at Tabuk. Emperor Heraclius did not want to engage in war with a man who he recognized to be a Prophet (PBUH) of God, lest Rome incur the severe wrath of Allah. The Romans also recalled the casualties they had incurred at Mutah in the previous battle against the Muslims. This time the Islamic nation state had organized a far bigger army, and the Romans were scared to meet such a dedicated opponent on the battlefield.

Ultimately, the Expedition of Tabuk was a character-building test for the Muslims and a preparation for future battles against the two superpowers, the Roman Empire and the Persian Empire. A secondary benefit was that while staying at Tabuk for 20 days, the Prophet (PBUH) and the Muslims were also able to establish peace treaties

with Northern tribes – some of whom had previously been loyal to Rome. This extended the political reach of the Islamic nation state and brought in additional tax revenue.

On the return journey, the camel of the Prophet (PBUH) wandered off. The Prophet (PBUH) requested his friends to search for his mount. The army paused its march.

A hypocrite remarked, "This is a man who thinks he is a Prophet, he says revelation comes from the Heavens, and he does not even know where his camel is!"

Although the hypocrite was not within ear shot, the Prophet (PBUH) stood up and repeated what the man had said.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) continued, "I swear by Allah, I am a human, and I only know what Allah tells me. Allah has just told me that my camel is stuck in a valley. Its harness has caught a tree. So go get the camel."

At another time, a different hypocrite at the rear of the army said, "Here is the Prophet (PBUH) telling us that we will conquer Rome and Persia. Who does he think he is?"

A different hypocrite unfairly remarked, "Look at these people around us. They recite the Quran, but they are cowardly and fat in their bellies."

A true believer heard the crude jokes and responded, "You are lying, oh enemy of Allah! I will tell the Prophet (PBUH) exactly about this statement of disbelief. How dare you say this!"

Both the believer and one of the hypocrites raced to the front of the army. At that very time, the Prophet (PBUH) was receiving revelation.

Before the hypocrite could reach the front and make an excuse, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) recited from the Quran, "The hypocrites fear lest a chapter of the Quran should be revealed about them, showing them what is in their hearts. Say, '[Go ahead and] mock! But certainly Allah will bring to light all that you fear. If you ask them

[about this], they declare, 'We were only talking idly and joking.' Say, 'Was it at Allah, and His revelations and His Messenger [PBUH] that you were mocking?' Make no excuse; you have disbelieved after you had believed."²⁴³

Then the hypocrite reached the Prophet (PBUH), jumped off his camel, and blurted out the very excuse that Allah quoted him and miraculously revealed beforehand. Disgraced, the hypocrite hung onto the stirrup of the camel of the Prophet (PBUH), while the Last Messenger (PBUH) rode on, not looking down.

One night on the journey back, the Prophet (PBUH) and two friends rode to the top of a cliff. Sensing it was their opportunity to strike, a group of hypocrites with covered faces charged menacingly on their mounts toward Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with the intent to throw him down the valley. Still on his camel, the Prophet (PBUH) reacted quickly and was able to repel the attempt on his life. Recognizing that their assassination attempt had failed, the group of hypocrites fled. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) safely descended down the cliff with his two friends. Rather than punishing them, the Prophet (PBUH) supplicated against the assassins and decided to move on.

As Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the army reached the outskirts of Madinah, the people walked outside of the city to happily greet them. The women and children sang with great elation. The Prophet (PBUH) reentered the city, prayed in the mosque, and greeted visitors. Then over 80 men – who had not responded to the call to join the army – came to the Prophet (PBUH) to offer their excuses. Most of them were hypocrites, and he politely accepted their stories, leaving their matter to Allah. For this, Allah mildly chastised the Prophet (PBUH) for not testing who had the legitimate excuse versus who did not. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was able to exercise his own reasoning, but he was not perfect. Allah, the Most Merciful, forgave him for this.

Then it was the turn of one of the more ardent, loyal Muslims, Kab ibn Malik, to speak with the Prophet (PBUH).

Although Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was not happy with Kab, he smiled and asked, "What is your excuse, oh Kab? Did you not have good health? Didn't you purchase a camel?"²⁴⁴

Kab responded, "Messenger of Allah, had I been speaking to anyone on the face of the earth other than you, I would have been able to avoid his anger by giving some sort of an excuse. I can make a case for myself. But I know for certain that if I were to tell you lies in order to win your pleasure, Allah would soon make the truth known to you, and I would incur your displeasure. If, on the other hand, I tell you the truth and you are not happy with me because of it, I would hope for a better result from Allah. By Allah, I have no excuse whatsoever. I have never been more physically able or in better circumstances than I was when I stayed behind."

"You have certainly told the truth," said the Prophet (PBUH). "You await Allah's judgement."²⁴⁵

Kab was one among only three men who were honest and did not try to make up false excuses to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for their absence in the Expedition of Tabuk. Because he was just a mortal man, receiving divine revelation from Allah, the Prophet (PBUH) waited with Kab and everyone else for Allah's ultimate judgement in the matter.

Allah commanded that the people were not to interact or speak with the three Muslim men who failed to participate in the Expedition of Tabuk until it was ordered otherwise. For 60 days, the three men were isolated and otherwise unable to socialize with others. This psychological punishment weighed heavily on the three Muslims, driving them to sincerely repent to the only One whose door never closed on them— Allah. Young and affable, Kab especially buckled under the ostracism and poured his heart out to Allah, asking for forgiveness.

After two months had passed, a man hiked to the top of the mountain near the mosque in Madinah and announced, "Oh Kab ibn Malik, be happy!"

Kab fell down in prostration, grateful to Allah. A rider came to convey the news that Allah had revealed to the Prophet (PBUH) that He had accepted their repentance. Overjoyed, Kab gifted all that he

had left in his house – the clothes on his back – to the rider. He rushed to the mosque. The Prophet (PBUH) and the Muslims were present, many of them congratulating Kab. Allah also forgave the Prophet (PBUH), the Muslim emigrants from Makkah, and the Ansar because they obediently went on the Expedition of Tabuk. The three men who had stayed behind and who made no excuses for their failure were forgiven.²⁴⁶

Kab said, “I greeted the Prophet (PBUH), and his face became bright with joy, like the full moon.”

“Be happy and be given the glad tidings,” Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said to Kab. “This is the best news that you have ever heard since the day your mother gave birth to you!”

“Oh Messenger of Allah,” Kab inquired, “is this from you or from Allah?”

The Prophet (PBUH) said, “No, it is from Allah.”²⁴⁷

It was not long after the Muslims returned from Tabuk that ibn Ubayy – head of the hypocrites – fell sick and was on his death bed. He requested that the Prophet (PBUH) visit him. Despite all of ibn Ubayy’s hostility to the Prophet (PBUH), the Last Messenger (PBUH) had a very kind heart and obliged. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not condone ibn Ubayy’s past behavior but instead hoped that his symbolic action would convince other people to embrace Islam.

After ibn Ubayy died, his son requested the Prophet (PBUH) give his shirt to wrap around ibn Ubayy. Although he did not own many clothes, the Last Messenger (PBUH) agreed to do so. The hypocrite’s body was brought into the mosque. The Prophet (PBUH) stood up to walk so that he could offer the funeral prayer.

Umar – known for his principled, exacting character – was near the Prophet (PBUH). He hung onto the Prophet’s (PBUH) robe and reminded him of several of ibn Ubayy’s past, dishonorable actions.

Umar asked, “Messenger of Allah, are you going to pray for him when Allah has enjoined you not to do so?”²⁴⁸

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) responded, “Allah has given me the choice when He said, ‘Whether you ask forgiveness for them

[hypocrites] or ask not forgiveness for them, [and even] if you ask seventy times for their forgiveness, Allah will not forgive them.”²⁴⁹

Not able to logically overcome what he had witnessed of ibn Ubayy with his own eyes, Umar could not understand how they could pray for somebody who had so consistently opposed Islam.

Leading with mercy, the Prophet (PBUH) said, “If I knew that he would be forgiven should I pray for him more than 70 times, I would certainly do so.”

After Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) led the funeral prayer, he went to the graveyard with several other people. The Prophet (PBUH) went into the grave and helped to bury ibn Ubayy.²⁵⁰

Allah then revealed in the Quran, “And never [O Muhammad (PBUH)] pray [funeral prayer] for any of them [hypocrites] who dies, nor stand at his grave. Certainly they disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger, and died while they were disobedient.”²⁵¹

Having displayed incredible compassion as an example to humanity, the Prophet (PBUH) was commanded by Allah never again to lead the funeral prayer for any of the hypocrites nor to visit their graves. Actions speak louder than words, but the ultimate word is that of Allah.

40. Change of Allegiance

Just before returning from Tabuk to Madinah, the Prophet (PBUH) was joined by Urwah, a young, highly respected chief from the tribe of Thaqif. Urwah embraced Islam and asked the Prophet (PBUH) if he could return to Taif to call the people to the faith. Although Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was very concerned about the threat which the people of Thaqif posed to his friend's safety, Urwah wanted to return and spread the message.

"Messenger of Allah," Urwah said, "they love me more than they love their own daughters, and if they found me asleep, they would not even wake me up."²⁵²

When he returned to Taif and beckoned the tribe of Thaqif to become Muslim, the people were displeased and cursed him. It was not that long ago that the Muslims had laid siege to their city. Then one morning at dawn, when Urwah woke up and gave the call to prayer, an arrow struck him. Urwah fell from a height and was seriously wounded. In his final hours, he was asked how revenge should be exacted.

Urwah responded, "My death is an honor given to me by Allah, who has made me a martyr. Nothing should be done more than was done in the case of those martyrs who were killed before Allah's Messenger left here. Bury me alongside them."

Urwah died a martyr, killed by his own people, in his own city. The public relations embarrassment from the assassination of one of their very own noble leaders, simply because he was Muslim, gave Thaqif a wakeup call. Additionally, the tribe of Thaqif could not bear the thought of running the risk of another battle with the Muslim army over the murder of Urwah. They decided to send a full delegation to Madinah to negotiate with the Prophet (PBUH).

When the delegation had reached the outskirts of Madinah, they met a man – named al-Mughirah – who was originally from Thaqif and had been Muslim for many years. He was so happy upon learning of their mission that he rushed to share the news with the Prophet (PBUH). Abu Bakr saw al-Mughirah on the way, and upon hearing of the latest development, Abu Bakr implored al-Mughirah that he be the one to personally deliver the good news to the Prophet (PBUH). Al-Mughirah agreed, and Abu Bakr spoke with the Prophet (PBUH), hoping to gain even more favor.

Although al-Mughirah returned to the camp of Thaqif to teach them how to properly greet and address the Prophet (PBUH), the delegation ignored all of al-Mughirah's advice when they met the Last Messenger (PBUH). The Prophet (PBUH) ignored their poor manners and treated them honorably. He instructed that a special tent be set up inside the mosque so that they could hear the Quran during the five daily prayers. What better way to cause their hearts to incline to Islam than to listen to the authentic, eloquent words of God? The delegation witnessed first-hand the positive impact Islamic prayers had on the Muslims and the sense of peace it gave to them in their daily lives. The people in Madinah had lived in ignorance before, and after reforming, they were tasting great success in this world.

Leveraging an intermediary to facilitate the negotiation, the delegation and the Prophet (PBUH) conducted rounds of discussion over several days.

Then one morning, a delegate asked him, "Are you going to conclude an agreement with us so that we may return to our people?"

"Yes," Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) responded, "if you accept Islam. If you do not, then there is no meeting ground between us, and we cannot have a peace agreement."

The delegate decided that he would try to extract a concession, requesting an exception on the majority of income, which Thaqif derived from interest on debt.

The Prophet (PBUH) responded, "You may have only your principal...Allah says, 'O you who believe! Be afraid of Allah and give up what remains [due to you] from interest [from now onward], if you are [really] believers.'"²⁵³

The delegate then said, "We travel far and wide, and we cannot do without adultery. Can you give us a concession?"

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) answered, "It is forbidden. Allah says, 'Come not near to unlawful sex. Verily, it is a great sin and an evil way.'"²⁵⁴

"What about wine?" The delegate asked, "It is only the juice of the fruits we grow, and we cannot do without it."

The Prophet (PBUH) responded, "Allah has made it forbidden," and recited the appropriate passage from the Quran.

Having been denied concessions for interest, adultery, and alcohol, the delegation discussed privately amongst themselves, and decided to ask what he intended to do about their main, female idol. In the city of Taif, the goddess idol drew worshippers from far and wide and was a rival for the idols that once littered the City of Makkah. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) resolutely signaled that it will be destroyed, just as the idols around the Kaba were smashed.

"That is impossible!" The delegate reacted, "Should the deity know that you want us to destroy her, she would kill all the people around her!"

Umar was present, and said, "How ignorant you are! The deity is nothing but a stone."

The delegate rebuffed him, "We have not come to speak to you, Umar."

The delegation tried very hard to persuade the Prophet (PBUH) to allow them to keep the idol for three years. He denied their request. They then reduced the period to two years. He refused again. The delegation decreased the extension from one year and all the way down to one month. The Prophet (PBUH) was unwavering in his position.

The delegation of Thaqif gave up and said, "Then you destroy her yourself. We shall never destroy her."

They were so reluctant to fully embrace Islam that they even asked to be excused from praying and purifying themselves with water before prayer because they claimed the weather got too cold in Taif.

The Prophet (PBUH) said, "I will relieve you of the task of destroying your idols with your own hands. As for prayers, no good religion is without prayer."²⁵⁵

After the delegation had another private debrief, the delegation of Thaqif finally accepted Islam on the tenth day of their visit. The agreement was written and acknowledged by both sides. The Prophet (PBUH) let the delegation from Thaqif know that he would be sending a delegation from Madinah to handle the destruction of the female idol in Taif after their departure.

Since the representatives of Thaqif visited during the month of Ramadan, they fasted with the Muslims upon accepting Islam, giving up food and water only during daylight hours for the sake of Allah.

The delegation also requested that he select someone to be their leader in prayer. The Last Messenger (PBUH) chose one of their 20-year old delegates for the role since he had been discretely learning about Islam and the Quran from the Prophet (PBUH) during Thaqif's visit. If the Prophet (PBUH) was not available, this young man learned

from Abu Bakr. Light in his years but heavy in knowledge, this youth received the mantle of leadership, passing over other delegates who were higher in seniority.

After 15 days in Madinah, the delegation returned to Taif. They sensed that their lives could be in danger if they did not communicate their agreement with the Prophet (PBUH) to their people in a careful manner. They ran the same risk as the late Urwah. The delegation spoke with the broader tribe of Thaqif, and it was not easy for their people to embrace Islam. Change is not easy. Since none of them wanted to face the Prophet (PBUH) and the believers in war again, the people of Thaqif decided to become Muslim.

Shortly thereafter, the delegation from Madinah arrived to level the idol. The group included al-Mughirah, their fellow clansman and a longtime Muslim. The entire tribe of Thaqif turned out to witness the impending destruction.

With an axe in hand, al-Mughirah quietly said to his friends from Madinah, "I will give you a good laugh at the Thaqif."

When he struck the idol, al-Mughirah pretended to collapse on the floor. The people of Thaqif erupted with cheers and jeered at the Muslims from Madinah.

Al-Mughirah jumped up and rebuffed them, "Foul on you, Thaqif. What is she but a heap of mud and stones? It is about time you recognized Allah's blessings and worshipped Him alone."

Al-Mughirah and his friends broke the shrine's door, climbed the wall, and leveled the idol.

A custodian of the idol insisted, "The foundation will now show its fury, and they will sink down into the bottom of the earth."

The Muslims successfully dug up the foundation and removed the large quantity of exotic jewelry on the idol. The people of Thaqif held their breath, waiting for some disaster to annihilate the idol's exterminators. They waited. Nothing happened. Thaqif was shocked;

the flimsy layer of their faith was now solidifying around their hearts as they realized the truth of Islam. Eventually, a mosque was constructed in Taif on top of the very site which used to have the idol.

When the Muslim delegation returned and gave the Prophet (PBUH) the jewelry as well as nice garments, he thanked and praised Allah. The Prophet (PBUH) distributed this wealth to the impoverished.

Thaqif was the last big tribe with any clout on the Arabian Peninsula to give up idolatry in favor of monotheism. The delegation from Taif was one among numerous tribes who visited Madinah to discuss Islam, with many of the delegations becoming Muslim. It was not so long ago that Madinah had been attacked by all sorts of pagan clans and opposed by powerful forces in the Peninsula. Now, it was visited by the majority of tribes wanting to gain favor with the Prophet's (PBUH) nation state and join Islam's global cause. The number of Muslims skyrocketed in a short period of time.

41. Christians of Najran

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) sent a letter to the Bishop of a Christian tribe from the province of Najran, which was located on the Arabian Peninsula, just north of Yemen. His correspondence read –

“In the name of the God worshipped by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I call on you to worship Allah alone and not to worship anyone alongside Him, and I call on you to give your loyalty only to Allah rather than to any of His servants. Should you refuse, you have to pay a tax. Should you also refuse that, I will declare war against you.”²⁵⁶

After reading the Prophet’s (PBUH) letter, the Bishop was upset and called his friend for advice.

The Bishop asked, “What do you say?”

“You know what God has promised Abraham about sending a Messenger from the children of Ishmael,” his friend responded. “You cannot rule out the fact that this man may be that Messenger. I have no opinion or judgement concerning prophethood. Had it been a matter

of this world, I would have given you my opinion, and I would have considered it carefully.”

Upon consulting with his people, the Bishop and the leadership of Najran decided to dispatch a large delegation of 60 individuals – 24 of whom were of their elite – to Madinah to understand their options and assess the strength of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

After a long journey, the delegation reached the Prophet (PBUH) and presented themselves wearing unique outfits. It was mid-afternoon and the Christians wanted to pray. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was a tolerant, hospitable man and allowed them to pray in the mosque.

The delegation stayed in Madinah for a few days. On the first day, the Christians had a lengthy discussion with the Prophet (PBUH), and they asked several questions about Jesus.

They eventually inquired, “If you agree with us that Jesus was born of a virgin, then who is his father?”

“I don’t have an answer for you now,” said Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). “Let Allah answer you.”²⁵⁷

The delegation also asked whether Abraham was a Christian or Jew.

By the time they met the following day, Allah had revealed verses in the Quran to the Prophet (PBUH) responding to the Christians, and he recited–

“Verily, the likeness of Jesus before Allah is the likeness of Adam. He created him from dust, then [He] said to him, ‘Be!’ – and he was.

“[This is] the truth from your Lord, so be not of those who doubt.

“Then whoever disputes with you concerning him [Jesus] after [all this] knowledge that has come to you, say [O Muhammad (PBUH)], ‘Come, let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves – then we pray and invoke the Curse of Allah upon those who lie.’”²⁵⁸

Under rare circumstances, after a lengthy discussion or debate, and only if necessary, can this last verse of mutual cursing be invoked.

The Prophet (PBUH) also recited from the Quran, "Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a true Muslim, and he was not of the polytheists."²⁵⁹

The next day the Prophet (PBUH) brought his family – including his daughter, Fatima, his grandsons, and his wives – so that he could issue the rare challenge. The delegation discussed the matter and decided not to run the risk of being cursed and destroyed. The Christians from Najran did not embrace Islam and instead opted for the tax. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was lenient and defined this particular tax as a nominal amount of cloth and silver per year payable to the Islamic nation state. The Christians were permitted to practice their religion in Najran without persecution. Also, the treaty could be terminated in the future.

Before leaving Madinah, the delegation requested the Prophet (PBUH) send a neutral judge back with them to resolve some of their internal disagreements, because they viewed the Muslims as being honest. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) agreed and sent a qualified Muslim to temporarily serve in this capacity.

On the return journey, the Christian patriarch's brother made an insulting comment about the Prophet (PBUH).

The patriarch responded, "Do not curse him."

His brother asked, "Why?"

"Because he is the Prophet," the patriarch admitted.

The brother inquired, "Why didn't you accept him then?"

The patriarch said, "Do you wish us to give up all of the honor, all of the wealth, and all of the ties that the [Roman] Emperor has given us?"

His brother was quite surprised at the admission. From insulting the Prophet (PBUH) one moment, the realization of truth led him to leave the Christian tribe the next moment and return to Madinah to embrace Islam.

42. Mission Complete

Precipitated by the call of Allah, like droplets of water moving as one around and around a whirlpool, the pilgrims circled the Kaba during the appointed time of Hajj—the big pilgrimage. They ebbed and flowed between the hills of Safa and Marwa. The pilgrims made their way around the City of Makkah. Nine years after the Muslims emigrated to Madinah, the Prophet (PBUH) instructed Abu Bakr to take a delegation of 300 believers to Makkah and perform Hajj, a requirement upon all Muslims who can afford the journey. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not go with them at that time.

He said, "Verily, the pagans circle the Kaba naked, and I do not wish to perform the Hajj until that is eliminated."

Some of the non-Qurayshi pagans had been doing a part of the pilgrimage unclothed because they wanted to be in the same natural state as when they were born. They also justified their desire to be nude during the Hajj because they did not want to wear the same clothes in which they had sinned and disobeyed Allah. Both reasons were

perverted. Surprisingly, only those pagans who considered themselves to be the most pious circled the Kaba in such a vulgar state.

Hours after Abu Bakr's departure from Madinah, Allah revealed new verses in the Quran. Allah ordered that the Muslims dissolve all treaties with the pagans, except for those with whom a specific time clause was previously agreed to, assuming both sides were still adhering to their promises. If the pagans and idolaters desired to remain upon their disbelief, they were given four months to travel safely before having to permanently depart the Arabian Peninsula. Furthermore, if any of them asked for protection, the Muslims were commanded to grant it to them, share the message of Islam, and then guide them to a safe place. Pagans who chose to embrace Islam were to be accepted into the community of Muslims without prejudice. Particularly in lands outside of the Arabian Peninsula ruled by Muslim leaders, Muslims are to allow non-Muslims the flexibility to practice their religion in their places of worship and homes.²⁶⁰

The Prophet (PBUH) gave his camel to Ali and ordered him to go to Abu Bakr. Ali was also instructed to convey the new Quranic verses to the pilgrims at that year's Hajj. The Prophet (PBUH) wanted to ensure that someone from his family would be the one to communicate to the pagans that the majority of treaties would be discontinued after four months.

When Ali had reached the delegation of Muslims, Abu Bakr asked him, "Are you being sent to be a commander over me, or am I still going to be the commander?"

Ali responded, "No, you are still the commander."²⁶¹

When he was close to Makkah, Ali recited the verses that were just revealed in the Quran. He then made four main points in his announcement. Firstly, nobody would enter Paradise except for a Muslim or a believer. Secondly, nobody would circle the Kaba naked, effective immediately. Thirdly, no pagan would ever circle the Kaba again after that Hajj. Lastly, contracts with the pagans would be valid for another four months, after which they would become null and void, except for those with specific time clauses.

The following year, before the next Hajj, one of the Prophet's (PBUH) close friends was departing to Yemen where he was to serve as a governor.

While walking with his noble friend, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said to him, "You may not see me again next year. When you pass by this mosque, you may see my grave."

Upon hearing this, his friend began to weep.

The Prophet (PBUH) addressed the people of Madinah and said, "The people closest to me are those who have God-consciousness, no matter who they are or where they are from."²⁶²

Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) intention to perform Hajj was announced. He felt that it could be his last opportunity to address the multitude of Muslims. Believers from all corners of the Arabian Peninsula came to Madinah so that they could travel with the Prophet (PBUH) and follow his way of performing the rites.

Beginning his journey, he supplicated, "Here I am O Allah, responding to Your call. Here I am! Here I am, You have no partner, here I am! Verily all praise, grace, and sovereignty belong to You. You have no partners."²⁶³

The Muslims arrived ten days later and camped just outside of Makkah at night. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) entered the City early on a Sunday morning. Over 100,000 pilgrims had come to Makkah for Hajj. Islam was spreading exponentially.

The Prophet's (PBUH) friend, Jabir, observed, "I saw as far as I could see in front of me nothing but riders and pedestrians, and also on my right and on my left and behind me like this. And the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) was prominent among us and the [revelation] of the Holy Quran was descending upon him. And it is he who knows [its true] significance. And whatever he did, we also did."²⁶⁴

Still wearing two simple pieces of white cloth, the Prophet (PBUH) circled the Kaba three times quickly and then another four times at a more relaxed pace. He then walked up mount Safa and faced the Kaba.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "There is no god but Allah. There is no partner with Him. His is the Sovereignty. To Him praise

is due, and He is Powerful over everything. There is no god but Allah alone, who fulfilled His promise, helped His servant and destroyed the confederates alone.”

He then walked for seven circuits between mounts Safa and Marwah, traversing a short span at the bottom of the valley at a run. A long time ago, the mother of Ishmael once ran as the Prophet (PBUH) now ran between the two mountains in search for water for her infant. Celebrating her legacy of love and tenacity, millions of men and women run in her footsteps.

The Prophet (PBUH) stayed in Makkah for four days. On Thursday, after the morning prayer, the Muslims traveled to a sacred place called Mina, just outside of the City. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) led them for five prayers between Noon that day until the morning prayer the following day.

After staying in his tent until the sun crossed the meridian, the Prophet (PBUH) mounted his camel and ventured to the plains called Arafat. Stretched across the Arabian plains, Arafat lay unsheltered from the beating sun. At that very place, all generations of people – past, present, and future – will someday be assembled, altogether before Allah, on the Day of Judgement. As part of what would be known as the farewell Hajj, the Prophet (PBUH) spoke to the approximately 100,000 pilgrims.

Still sitting on his camel, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, “All praise is due to Allah, so we praise Him, and seek His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evils of our souls and from the evils of our deeds. Whomsoever Allah guides none can misguide him; and whomsoever Allah leads astray, none can guide him. I bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah, having no partner with Him. He is the Most Sovereign and to Him belongs all praise. He grants life and causes death and has power over all things.

“O People, listen to me carefully for I do not know whether I will be amongst you again in this very place, and spread my words to those who are not here today.”

Even the pilgrims in the furthest tents could hear the voice of the Prophet (PBUH) as it was miraculously amplified across Arafat.²⁶⁵

He then raised his head and said, “O Allah! Haven't I conveyed Your message to them? Haven't I conveyed Your message to them? My Lord, bear witness.”

The Prophet (PBUH) continued, “Return the belongings to the ones who entrusted you with them. Impose no harm to anyone so that no one will impose any harm to you. Remember that you will indeed meet your Lord, and that He will indeed hold your deeds accountable.

“Everything pertaining to the Days of Ignorance is under my feet and completely abolished. Abolished are also the blood-revenges of the Days of Ignorance...Allah has forbidden you to take interest; therefore all interest shall be abolished. Your wealth, however, is yours to keep. Allah has judged that there shall be no interest [from debt]. You will neither inflict nor suffer any inequity.²⁶⁶

“Beware of Satan so that you may be steadfast in your religion. He has lost hope in misguiding you to worship him. So do not follow him even in the most trivial of your matters. When I am gone, do not return to disbelief and do not kill one another. Have I delivered my message?”

The people responded, “Yes, you have.”

The Prophet (PBUH) then said, “O People, you have certain duties toward your women and they have certain duties toward you. Treat your women with kindness, for they are your partners entrusted to you by Allah's permission. And it is your right that they do not be unchaste and make friends without your approval. But if they do that, you can chastise them, but not severely. Their rights upon you are that you should provide them with food and clothing in a fitting manner. Have I delivered my message?²⁶⁷

They confirmed, “Yes, you have.”

“All of you are children of Adam and Eve. An Arab does not have superiority over a non-Arab nor does a non-Arab have superiority over an Arab. A white does not have superiority over a black nor does a black have superiority over a white. The most noble amongst you in the sight of Allah is the one with most piety and good action.”

Echoing across the plain of Arafat, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exacted before the Muslims eloquent guidance on spirituality,

social welfare, justice, financial counsel, women's rights, and equality for all. A revolution was truly underway; he continued –

“O people, listen and obey! An Abyssinian slave can rule over you if he judges by the Book of Allah.

“O people, reflect on my words and understand them well. Believers are brothers to one another and constitute one brotherhood. Do not take property of your brother unless it was given to you by his permission. Do not do injustice to yourselves. Beware, no one is responsible for crime except the one who commits it. The father is not responsible for the crime of his child nor is the child responsible for the crime of his father. Have I delivered my message?

The Muslims responded, “Yes, you have.”

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) affirmed, “O people, know that no prophet will come after me and no new faith will follow. I leave with you the Quran and my example. So hold fast to them and you will not go astray. Do not transgress limits in the matters of your religion.”

Though the Prophet (PBUH) was given many miracles, the Quran is the ultimate, eternal miracle revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and will be present in its original state, unaltered by the whims of man or the currents of time. The Quran is the word of God for humanity until the end of time.²⁶⁸

He pointed his forefinger toward the sky and then to his people repeating thrice, “My Lord, be my witness. My Lord, be my witness. My Lord, be my witness.”

The Prophet (PBUH) wanted his Lord to witness that he had delivered the message of Islam in its entirety to all of mankind.

He concluded with a call to action, “All those listening to my message here shall pass it on to others not present here today. It may be that the last person will understand my words better than you who are present here today.”^{269, 270, 271, 272}

As the Prophet (PBUH) spoke these words, Allah revealed to him a verse of the Quran, “...this day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.”²⁷³

When it was time for the Noon prayer, Bilal summoned the people, and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) led the Muslims in prayer. Since they were traveling, they combined the afternoon prayer immediately after.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) rode his camel to a rocky mount where he then continuously stood for several hours in the sun, supplicating to Allah until sunset. The Prophet's (PBUH) endurance and dedication was incredible, even under such heat.

After performing several rites of Hajj, the time came to sacrifice animals consecrated for Allah. Before the big pilgrimage, the Prophet (PBUH) had requested that Ali bring 100 camels for Hajj. Ali had brought them from Yemen, where he was temporarily stationed as a judge. The camels rushed and raced to the Prophet (PBUH) wanting him to perform the sacrifice on each of them, which is not how animals typically behave around other people. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) sacrificed 63 camels himself while Ali did the rest.

Jabir observed, “The Prophet (PBUH) then commanded that a piece of flesh from each animal sacrificed should be put in a pot, and when it was cooked, both of them [the Prophet (PBUH) and Ali] took some meat out of it and drank its soup.”

The vast majority of the meat was distributed to the impoverished to eat.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also ordered that the holy water from the well of Zam Zam be drawn, and he drank it.

Opposing tribes used to swap out a sacred month – in which bloodshed was forbidden – for a non-sacred month so that they could go to war. Over time, the order of months got confused!

Merciful and intelligent, the Prophet (PBUH) continued to remedy the glitches of society, even when travelling and on a sacred journey. Intent to unite the Muslims and establish an additional part of the foundation for the new nation state to achieve success, the Prophet (PBUH) instructed the pilgrims to preserve the calendar as it was during that year.

He declared to the pilgrims, "Verily time has returned to its rightful place as it was on the day that Allah created the Heavens and the Earth. A year is twelve months, four of which are sacred..."

The Prophet (PBUH) asked, "What month is this?"

The people were silent, and he indicated that it was one of the sacred months.

The Prophet (PBUH) asked, "O people! What is the day today?"

Once again, they were quiet, and he signaled that it was the Day of Sacrifice.

The Prophet (PBUH) asked again, "What place is this?"

The pilgrims did not respond, and he indicated it was sacred land.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) confirmed, "No doubt! Your lives, your money, and your honor are sacred to one another like the sanctity of this day of yours, in this sacred city of yours, in this sacred month of yours.

"The real Muslim is the one from whose hands and tongue other Muslims are safe from. The believer is the one whom the people trust with their money and their property..."

"Fear Allah, pray your five prayers, fast during Ramadan, give in charity, obey your rulers, and you shall enter the Paradise of your Lord."

Finally, on his last night in Makkah, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) circled the Kaba seven more times and then headed home to Madinah.

43. Extraordinary Choice

Late one night in Madinah, the Prophet (PBUH) told a servant to saddle his mule. Surrounded by the calm of night, his mule clip-clopped through the roads of Madinah toward the graveyard. The Prophet (PBUH) had been ordered by Allah to pray for the Muslims who had passed away. He stood by the graves praying, asking for their forgiveness and being reminded of the reality of death.

The Prophet (PBUH) said to the servant, "Do you know that Allah has given me the choice of the keys to this world, everlasting life, and then Paradise, or to meet Allah right now and be in Paradise?"²⁷⁴

The servant pleaded with him to choose the former. The Prophet (PBUH) conveyed that he had already made his choice. On another occasion, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) prayed for the martyrs from the Battle of Uhud.

The next morning, his wife Aishah and the Prophet (PBUH) both woke up with headaches. He still went forward with leading the prayer at the mosque. The Prophet (PBUH) addressed the Muslims, saying that they would all meet in the afterlife at a pool in Paradise. At the banks of the river of Al-Kawthar, there are domes of hollow pearls. Its water will be sweeter than honey and have a pleasant fragrance.^{275,276}

While he was visiting each of his wives, his illness worsened. He requested to be moved to his wife, Aishah's home. As a result of a Jewess' attempted poisoning at Khaybar, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) could still feel the effects of the poison as it had finally reached his heart. Days passed by, and the Prophet (PBUH) developed a fever. There was no medicine at the time to reduce the fever. To bring his temperature down, he asked his kin to help him with a cold bath.²⁷⁷

The Prophet (PBUH) asked them, "Pour on me seven containers of water gathered from several wells."

They situated him in a tub which was owned by Hafsah, another one of his wives. Cool water was poured on him until he signaled them to stop.

The Prophet (PBUH) tightly wrapped a turban around his head to reduce the pain from his headache. He got dressed, and when his temperature had moderated, Ali and Al-'Abbas helped him to walk to the mosque. As he sat, the people came to him.

"I praise Allah," the Prophet (PBUH) said, "the One other than Whom there is no deity. If I have ever beaten any of you on his back, let him come and avenge himself by beating me on my back. If I ever abused anyone, let him come and abuse me. The one of you who is dearest to me is the one who has a right against me and claims it. By so doing, he releases me, and I will be able to meet Allah with nothing held against me by any person."

The Prophet (PBUH) mostly stayed inside as his health declined. In a rare instance when he felt a bit better, he returned to the mosque, where Abu Bakr, Umar, and the other Muslims were camping in hope that the Prophet (PBUH) would make a recovery.

"There is a servant from amongst the servants of Allah," Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained. "Allah has asked him to choose between this world and his Lord. He has chosen his Lord."

Most of the Muslims, however, did not make the connection, except for Abu Bakr, who had tears in his eyes.

The Prophet (PBUH) looked at Abu Bakr, and said, "The one who has done me the greatest favor...out of his wealth is Abu Bakr. Were I to choose a close friend in this world, I would have chosen Abu Bakr. But I cannot take a close friend because Allah has chosen me to be his close friend. However, I opt for a relationship of brotherhood in Islam with him until Allah unites us all with Him."^{278, 279}

The Prophet (PBUH) ordered that all doors that opened from Muslims' houses to the mosque be shut except for Abu Bakr's which was a clear indication of the coming succession in leadership within the community.

The Prophet (PBUH) had still been leading the five daily prayers. Still battling a fever, he returned home to lay down. When the time for the last evening prayer arrived, Bilal came to the Prophet (PBUH) before making the call to prayer. The Prophet (PBUH) tried to stand up, but he fainted. Water was poured on him, he stood up, and fainted again.

When he regained consciousness, the Prophet (PBUH) asked, "Have the people prayed yet?"

"No," the Muslims around him responded, "they are waiting for you, Messenger of Allah."

The Prophet (PBUH) fainted a total of seven times, attempting to get up and lead the prayer in the mosque. He requested that Abu Bakr should lead the prayers instead.

Aishah objected to her father doing so, "Abu Bakr is a soft man. When he stands in your position he may feel it too hard on him."

The Prophet (PBUH) reiterated, "Tell Abu Bakr to lead the prayers!"

Aishah brought Hafsa into the room to suggest that Hafsa's father, Umar, could lead the prayers instead. The Prophet (PBUH) became displeased with them in that moment.

"Go find Abu Bakr," he responded, "for Allah will not allow anyone other than Abu Bakr. All of you are acting like the women around Joseph!"

Shortly after, Abu Bakr did in fact lead the prayers at the mosque.

One day, the Prophet (PBUH) gathered his energy to go to the mosque. He smiled as he heard Abu Bakr leading the prayer. Abu Bakr noticed that the Prophet (PBUH) was present and wanted to step back to allow Allah's Messenger (PBUH) to lead. The Prophet (PBUH), who was looking amazingly radiant that day, signaled for Abu Bakr to stand in prayer. Due to his condition, the Prophet (PBUH) sat next to Abu Bakr, and the Prophet (PBUH) recited from the Quran.

After the prayer, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) addressed the Muslims. Given how loyal the Ansar had been as friends, advisors, warriors, and in so many other capacities, the Prophet (PBUH) praised them and commanded the Qurayshi Muslims to take care of the Ansar. The Ansar had kept their promise and fulfilled their duty.

The Prophet (PBUH) then ordered that the Arabian Peninsula be purified from all paganism. He advised them to treat future delegations with hospitality, which would make it easier for people to embrace Islam.

The Prophet (PBUH) said, "You should have good thoughts of Allah when you are about to die. Guard the prayers! Guard the prayers! Do not charge those whom your right hands possess with what they cannot bear. Fear Allah in your treatment of women."

These were the last remarks many of his friends heard him say.

On Sunday, the Prophet (PBUH) asked Aishah, "How much money do I have?"

She checked and found only seven silver dirhams or coins. This was not even enough money to get through a day comfortably. Aishah gave the coins to the Prophet (PBUH).

Holding the money in his hands, he said, "What will I say to Allah if I meet Allah with these coins?"

He gave it back to Aishah and ordered, "Go give it to the poor now."

The Prophet (PBUH) then fell unconscious again.

When he woke up, he asked Aishah, "Have you given it to the poor?"

Aishah had not yet done so, as she was caring for her husband and worried about his health. He fainted again, and upon stirring, he repeated the same question until Aishah gave the remaining coins to the poor. In his final hours, the Prophet (PBUH) had no gold, silver, or money. All he personally owned was some land, one mule, a little bit of barley, an oil-based lamp, and armor which was in the possession of a Jewish man as collateral for the barley given to the Prophet's (PBUH) family.

On Monday at dawn, Abu Bakr was leading the prayer with the Muslims standing behind in orderly rows, facing the direction of the Kaba. The Prophet (PBUH) woke up in Aishah's home, and he asked for help to sit up. He lifted the curtain to see inside the mosque. The Muslims saw his face.

His friend reflected, "His face was (as bright) as the paper of the Holy Book. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) felt happy and smiled. And we were confounded with joy while in prayer..."²⁸⁰

The Prophet (PBUH) was happy to see the Muslims praying. Abu Bakr took a step back, hoping that the Prophet (PBUH) would lead them in the morning prayer. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) signaled to his best friend to continue, and then the curtain came down.

When the Prophet (PBUH) was laying down, his daughter, Fatimah, saw how much he was suffering.

She exclaimed, "How...distressed my father is!"

Five out of his six children had passed away during the Prophet's (PBUH) lifetime.

He responded to his sole surviving daughter, "Oh Fatimah, your father will not suffer after today."²⁸¹

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) thought about how Angel Gabriel was sent every Ramadan so that the Prophet (PBUH) could recite the Quran to him. However, during the last Ramadan, the Prophet (PBUH) recited the Quran twice to Angel Gabriel. He knew that his time was drawing to a close.

The Prophet (PBUH) called Fatima close to him and he whispered, "I am about to die."

She could not bear being without her father and started crying.

Then he whispered to her, "You will be the first of my family to meet me, and you shall be the leader of the women of Paradise."

Then Fatimah smiled and laughed despite the prophecy that she would soon die because she would soon be reunited with the Prophet (PBUH) in Paradise.

With his fever and pain spiking, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) reached into the bucket of water next to him and wiped his forehead.

"Verily death has its pangs," he said. "There is no god except Allah. Oh Allah, help me to overcome the pangs of death."

Weeks before he fell ill, the Prophet (PBUH) had ordered that the Muslim army amass for a battle with the Roman Empire to conquer Syria and Palestine. Abu Bakr, Umar, and the soldiers delayed their departure from Madinah. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had selected the son of Zayd to be the commander of the Muslim army for this battle. People criticized this decision since the son of Zayd was not a Qurayshi, and his father was a freed slave. They also complained that he was too young. The Prophet (PBUH) rejected this type of racism and discrimination. Rather, the choice was made based on who was most capable and trustworthy.

At that time, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) gathered his friends and said, "If you dislike his leadership, then remember you also criticize the leadership of his father before him...By Allah he [son of Zayd] is worthy of being a leader. This man is the most beloved of people to me after his father."

Zayd led many expeditions that resulted in victories for the emerging nation state until he was martyred at the hands of the Romans during the Battle of Muthah. Thus, choosing the son of Zayd was wise in that he was motivated to avenge the personal loss, among other reasons.

On the Monday when the Prophet (PBUH) was battling a terrible fever, the son of Zayd, along with a few soldiers, visited the Prophet (PBUH). The Last Messenger (PBUH) was too sick to talk at that moment but raised his hand up to pray. The Prophet (PBUH) then pointed to the son of Zayd to indicate that he was praying for him to Allah.

Aishah sat down and crossed her legs. She lifted and laid the Prophet's (PBUH) head on her shoulder and bosom to bring him comfort.

Aishah's brother walked in using a plant-based toothbrush. The Prophet (PBUH) looked at the brush, and Aishah asked him if he wanted it. He motioned in affirmation. She got the brush and bit on the unused end of the stem to loosen it up. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) cleaned his teeth vigorously so that his breath could be fresh. The Prophet (PBUH) gave the brush to Aishah, who gave it back to her brother.

Aishah said, "I felt his head getting heavier in my lap. I looked at his face and noticed that his eyes were staring hard."

The angel of death had arrived upon Allah's command, giving the Prophet (PBUH) a choice.

Aishah leaned down to hear the Prophet (PBUH) speak his last words softly, "I want to be with the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs, and the doers of good. Oh Allah, forgive me. Oh Allah, have mercy on

me. I want to be with you, oh Allah...The Highest Company in Heaven."

Aishah stated, "By Him who has sent you with the truth, you have been given a choice and you have made your choice."

Slightly after the Noon prayer, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) passed away from this life. He awaits all those who believe in Allah and the Last Messenger (PBUH). He awaits the sincere believers in Paradise.

Fatimah reentered the room and said, "Oh my father, you have answered the call of your Lord. Oh my father, you are going to end up in the highest level of Paradise. Oh my father, who can we give the news of your death?"

Upon learning the news, the Muslims were beyond grief-stricken. Many could not fathom what had just happened.

Despite how loyal he had been to the Prophet (PBUH) and despite being destined for great things, Umar was so shocked that he blurted out, "These are the hypocrites that are spreading these lies...I don't want to hear anybody tell me that the Prophet (PBUH) has died...He is going to come back!"

Abu Bakr arrived as Umar was making these remarks. He went immediately to his daughter, Aishah's home and saw the late Prophet (PBUH) covered. Abu Bakr uncovered the Prophet's (PBUH) face and kissed his forehead.

While crying, Abu Bakr said, "My father and my mother may be sacrificed for your sake. The one death that Allah has decreed that you shall experience, you have now had. You shall never die again. How beautiful are you in life and in death, oh Messenger of Allah."

Abu Bakr came back outside and saw that Umar was still stunned, speaking to the people.

Abu Bakr exclaimed, "Oh Umar, sit down!"

Umar kept standing and stared back at him, not able to fully comprehend what had just happened.

Abu Bakr addressed the Muslims in the mosque, "Listen to me...People, if any of you has been worshipping Muhammad, let him

know that Muhammad is dead. He who worships Allah knows that Allah is always alive; He never dies."

Abu Bakr then recited verses from the Quran that had been revealed after the Battle of Uhud –

"Muhammad (PBUH) is no more than a Messenger, and indeed (many) Messengers have passed away before him. If he dies or is killed, will you then turn back on your heels (as disbelievers)? And he who turns back on his heels, not the least harm will he do to Allah, and Allah will give reward to those who are grateful.

"And no person can ever die except by Allah's leave and at an appointed term. And whoever desires a reward in (this) world, We shall give him of it; and whoever desires a reward in the Hereafter, We shall give him thereof. And We shall reward the grateful." ²⁸²

Upon hearing these verses following the death of the Prophet (PBUH), Umar collapsed to the ground out of grief and could not bring himself to stand for a brief time.

On Tuesday, the family of the Prophet (PBUH) met to discuss how to prepare and wash the body of the Prophet (PBUH) before the funeral. While deliberating, they all fell asleep and received guidance to wash the Prophet (PBUH) with his clothes on. After family members washed him, they shrouded him in three white, Yemeni garments.

Then different suggestions were made about where to bury him. The Prophet (PBUH) had once guided Abu Bakr on this matter.

"I remember hearing from the Prophet (PBUH) one time," Abu Bakr said, "that he told me that Allah never takes the soul of a Prophet except at the place where Allah wants him to be buried."

Many Muslims came to offer the funeral prayer over the course of Tuesday and Wednesday. They took turns doing so since the new leader of the nation state had yet to be selected and would have typically led a congregational funeral prayer. Also, Aishah's home, where the Prophet (PBUH) would be buried, was not big enough to accommodate everyone at once. First the men prayed. Then the women entered. Lastly, the children came in. After the funeral prayers,

on a Wednesday evening, the Prophet (PBUH) was buried underneath where his mattress had been situated.

May Allah's peace and blessings be upon the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who came with the ultimate truth, as a mercy to the worlds of man, jinn, and all of existence.

Had Zayd been alive, he would have become the undisputed leader of the Muslims. Shortly after the death of the Prophet (PBUH), Abu Bakr became the leader of the nation state. After his rule, Umar took charge and the Muslim army conquered the entire Persian Empire in just two years, despite the Romans being unable to do so for hundreds of years. With this feat, the believers of Islam ruled over the lands of Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and others. The magnificent Persian palaces and wealth came into the Islamic empire. Umar and the army also conquered a great deal of the other global superpower, the Roman Empire, including Syria, Jerusalem, and other lands. Future generations have been astounded at how the two dominant empires of the time came into Muslim rule at such lightning speed. The foundation was laid for the light of Islam to brighten the lives of people around the world. The Last Messenger's (PBUH) prophecy had come true.²⁸³

44. Epilogue: The Messiah

When the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was alive, on occasion, he described events that will occur in the future. Toward the end of time, he prophesized that ignorance will be pervasive and knowledge will be scarce. Tribulations will be widespread – intoxicants, illicit sex, bloodshed, and disasters will all increase. Time will pass quickly, and a believer will find it takes even more courage to practice Islam.

When the prominent leader of a nation dies, a severe civil war will rage the likes of which no country has ever seen. It will be the worst of times. Three men – sons of rulers – will fight each other over the ancient treasure that is buried under the area of the Kaba in Makkah. They will battle in the sacred land, but none of them shall find the treasure nor will any of them win.

Amidst the chaos, a man will emerge who will dispel evil and restore good in the world. This individual will be known as '*the Mahdi*,' which means the one who is guided and the one who will guide others. In the earlier part of his life, he will not be as spiritually

connected as he is destined to be. In one night, he will repent, and Allah will purify him.

The Mahdi will be a Qurayshi descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), specifically from the family line of the Prophet's (PBUH) grandson, Hasan. Although he will not be a prophet, the Mahdi will have the same name as the Last Messenger (PBUH) at birth, Muhammad ibn Abdullah. He will be similar to the Prophet (PBUH) in customs and manners but not in physical appearance. Nevertheless, the Mahdi will be handsome, with a large forehead and an aquiline nose.

One day in the future, the Mahdi will depart from Madinah, fleeing for his safety until he will arrive at Makkah. Enemies will target him, and he will seek protection. When he will be hiding inside the Kaba itself, the people will insist that he come outside, as they will feel that he can help to bring about an end to the civil war. As the Mahdi will stand by the Kaba, the people will want to pledge their allegiance to him, but he will not want to accept it from them because of the immense responsibility that will come with leadership. Nonetheless, he will overcome his reservations and will accept their allegiance. The coming of the Mahdi will be such a momentous occasion that even if they have to crawl, the most loyal of believers from different lands will do anything to come and give their pledge to the Mahdi.

Unwilling to cede power to the Mahdi, an opposing army dispatched by the enemy will march toward Makkah intending to attack the Kaba – despite its sanctity – because the Mahdi will have entered in it to seek refuge. As the soldiers will camp outside of the City of Makkah, the ground underneath them will miraculously open up, and they will fall right through and be destroyed.

Then a different army with black flags will emerge from the East, specifically the land of Khorasan – which encompasses modern day Afghanistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan – and will march to the Mahdi to help him and pledge their allegiance. The Mahdi's emergence will signal that the Day of Judgment has drawn even nearer.²⁸⁴

During his rule over a seven year period, the Muslim world will be united under a single leader, the Mahdi, in such an unparalleled way as never witnessed before in the history of Islam. Agricultural fields will produce plentiful fruits and crops. The Mahdi will give in charity with such generosity and without the slightest fear of poverty. Peace and security will be restored.

The Prophet (PBUH) predicted, "He will fill the earth with justice, as it was filled with wrong-doing and injustice [before the Mahdi's arrival]."

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also prophesized that during the lifetime of the Mahdi, the worst affliction that humanity has ever experienced will appear – the Dajjal, otherwise known as the "antichrist" by Christians. The Dajjal will emerge between the lands of Syria and Iraq. He will look young, have curly hair, and have a protruding eye. He will walk as fast as the clouds move with the wind. The Dajjal will wreak havoc in the world and create mischief wherever he goes.

Those days will be the worst of times, leaving people feeling defenseless for what tomorrow will bring. A man will wake up a believer and fall asleep a disbeliever. Although his time on earth will be, "for forty days," as the Prophet (PBUH) said, "One day will be like a year, one day like a month, one day like a week, and the rest of the days will be like your days."

The Prophet (PBUH) predicted, "He [Dajjal] will come to the people and call them to his obedience, and they will affirm their faith in him and respond to him. He will then give command to the sky, and it will send its rain upon the earth, and he will then send his command to the earth, and it will grow vegetation. Then in the evening their pasturing animals will come to them with their humps very high and their udders full of milk and their flanks stretched.

"He will then come to another people and invite them, but they will reject him, and he will leave them in barren lands and without any goods and chattels! He would then walk through the waste land and say to it, 'Bring forth your treasures,' and the treasures will come out and follow him like swarms of bees.

"He will then call a person brimming with youth, strike him with the sword, cut him into two pieces, and make these pieces lie at a distance, which is generally between the archer and his target. He will then call that young man, and he will come forward, laughing, with his face gleaming out of joy."

The Dajjal will try to enter Madinah to destroy it, but two angels will prevent him from entering.

The Prophet (PBUH) said, "No one shall plot to harm Madinah except that Allah will dissolve him like salt is dissolved in water."²⁸⁵

The Mahdi, along with the Muslims will battle courageously against the Dajjal and his forces, knowing that they will not be able to defeat him until the Messiah returns. One day, the war between good and evil will return to Syria. The Mahdi will stand to lead the morning prayer, Fajr. After the call to prayer is made, but before the congregation starts, the Muslims will look up with a collective sigh of relief.

The Prophet (PBUH) said, "It will be at this very time that Allah will send Jesus, son of Mary, who will descend at the white minaret in the Eastern side of Damascus, wearing two garments lightly dyed and placing his hands on the wings of two angels. When he will lower his head, there would fall drops of water from his head, and when he will raise it up, drops like pearls would scatter from it."

Addressing Jesus, the Mahdi will say, "This is your prayer to lead."

"No," Jesus will respond, "the call to prayer was given for you. So, you lead the prayer."

The Mahdi will lead the prayer, and Jesus will pray behind him as a sign of respect and honor for the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) community.

The Prophet (PBUH) continued, "Every disbeliever who will find Jesus' smell will die, and his smell will reach as far as he will be able to see.

"Jesus will then search for the Dajjal until he will catch hold of him at the gate of Lod and kill him.

"Then the people, whom Allah will have protected, will come to Jesus, and he will wipe their faces and will inform them of their ranks in Paradise, and it will be under such conditions that Allah will reveal to Jesus these words:

'I have brought forth from amongst my slaves such people against whom none will be able to fight, so take these people safely to the mountain.'

"And then Allah will send the Gog and Magog people, and they will swarm down from every slope. The first of them will pass the Lake Tiberias and drink all its water. And when the last of them will pass, he will say, 'There was once water there.'

"Jesus and his companions will then be so hard-pressed that the head of an ox will be dearer to them than one hundred dinar, and Jesus along with his companions, will make supplication to Allah, who will send insects which will attack the necks of the Gog and Magog people until they all will perish like a single person.

"Jesus and his companions will then come down and they will not find in the earth as much space as a single span which would not be filled with their corpses and their stench. Jesus and his companions will then again beseech Allah, who will send birds whose necks will be like those of Bactrian camels, and they will carry them and throw them where Allah will desire. Then Allah will send down rain which will spare no house in the city or in the countryside. It will wash away the earth until it appears like a mirror.

"Then the earth will be told to bring forth its fruit and restore its blessings; and as a result of this, there will grow such a big pomegranate that a group of people will eat from it and seek shelter under its skin. Milk will be so blessed that the milk of one she-camel will suffice for a large company, and the cow will give so much milk, that it will suffice for a whole tribe. The sheep will give so much milk that a whole family will be able to drink out of that.

"At that time Allah will send a pleasant wind which will soothe people even under their armpits, and will take the life of every true believer, and only the wicked will survive. They will commit adultery in public like donkeys, and the Resurrection Day will be held."²⁸⁶

On the Last Day, there will be a huge cloud of smoke, and the sun will rise from the West instead of the East. There will not be a single person left on earth worshipping Allah alone. It will be the apocalypse of the Final Hour.

Learn More

To learn more about Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), please refer to these suggested resources –

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Directory of Local Mosques & Islamic Organizations:
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